00088983

THE

ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY

Town Hall, Bombay

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

LOVE AND VALOUR.

VOL. I.

LOVE AND VALOUR.

BY

TOM HOOD.

88983

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1871.

The right of Translation is reserved.

00088983

LONDON :
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

LOVE AND VALOUR.

CHAPTER I.

ROOMS IN THE OLD QUAD.

I DON'T think there is a finer street in the world, taking it with all its associations, than "the High" at Oxford. If you stand before the residence of the Principal of Brasenose and look down it, you must own that you have seldom seen a nobler sweep of buildings. There is St. Mary's church, with its graceful spire, and the noble front of All Souls'; and on the other side the crumbling façade of old University; and farther on—too far off to let you see how ugly it is—

comes Queen's; and beyond that, again, the beautiful tower of Magdalen, with its sweet chimes.

You reflect how many great men have trod this very ground—what giants have been reared in those solemn old colleges—what golden-mouthed divines have thrilled young hearts with devotional enthusiasm in that old University church—what a noble stream of England's wisest and best and noblest has flowed down this quiet old street from time immemorial—a stream that widened out anon to enrich, to honour, to beautify our country.

It is a fine wide street this old High-street of the University city, with a roadway that dwindles London Streets into lanes, and a pavement so broad that it is a luxury only to walk on it and feel that you cannot be hustled.

It is like no other street that I know. Wherever you may chance to go, you never see a street that makes you say to yourself, "Ah! how like the High!" It is——

"Whoop! Hurray! Yoicks!"

It is quite impossible to continue a vein of serious reflection when four young gentlemen in caps and gowns whisk suddenly round the corner out of Radcliffe-square, rush on the ruminating stranger standing in front of the residence of the Principal of B. N. C., impinge violently on his diaphragm, and skurry off again after brief but fervent apologies, still vociferating—

"Who-o-o-o-p! Yo-icks! Ho-o-o-o-ray!"

Away they go, helter-skelter, behaving just as a parcel of children should do in their nursery, and regarded by the townsfolk in much that light. One long-legged youth leads, waving an oblong slip of paper in his

hand. When I said just now that these lads were in caps and gowns I was a little in error, which may be pardoned, considering the sudden manner in which they presented themselves on the field of sight, and obtruded themselves on the region of digestion. They are not, strictly speaking, in cap and gown. They wear their caps, it is true, and very curious caps they are, in some instances loose bags of rattling board, which puts in a very white and new deal-like appearance at the corners, or rather at the holes where corners should be. Their gowns, however, are, for the most part, carried over their arms—why, this deponent will not take upon himself to say. An undergrad's gown, or rather what he makes it, is not cumbrous wear, and would be less in his way on his back than it is when slung on his arm. It is a mere square of stuff—the shorter the

better, *pace* undergrads, and at rare intervals adorned with one or two streamers. I may add, that streamers are the exception rather than the rule.

It is perhaps because the statutes direct that the gown shall be worn, not carried, that the lads prefer the making porters of themselves to the less inconvenient plan of wearing their academical *toga*. There are, to the best of my recollection, two questions which a young man at Oxford asks himself before doing anything. The first is, "Is it nice?" If this be settled in the affirmative, there is no necessity to prolong the inquiry. But if the answer be doubtful, or even if it be in the negative, there is a second proposition, "Is it wrong?" And I am bound to say that if the reply be to the effect that it is directly opposed to statutory discipline, you may consider the thing done.

However, we are losing sight of our excited young friends who tear full speed along the High to Carfax, and dash down "St. Ald's." Opposite the Post Office they meet the Proctor, who looks half inclined to stop them and read them a lecture *De Vestitu Academico*, but observing the little bit of paper which creates the excitement, smiles and lets them go unchallenged. So they rush with much hallooing through the gate of Denbigh College and across the Old Quad towards a set of rooms on the ground-floor of No. 3 staircase. At the window of those rooms, if you had been very quick, you might have caught sight of a somewhat anxious face. For it was about the time when the Clerk of the Schools should be giving out the testamurs, and if there were not one for "Edvardus Harding e Coll: Denb:" the proprietor of the anxious face

would feel himself in the most unpleasant position of being "ploughed for Smalls."

Edward Harding had been well thought of by the head-master of the school from which he had been transferred to Oxford, and was considered likely to reflect credit on that establishment. Uuluckily, however, when the necessity for application which existed at school was withdrawn, the application vanished too. A cool tankard of beer and a pipe after breakfast are delicacies which a busy man dreams of—which a lad at Oxford hardly realises the full meaning of. But they are, it must be owned, conducive to idleness, and when Edward Harding suddenly found his last chance for "Smalls" staring him in the face through fragrant clouds of smoke, and through the glass bottom of his pewter, he found himself slightly unprepared for the examination.

He took stock of his learning. He could manage two Greek plays, he thought—Sophocles for preference—provided they didn't put him on in the choruses. And he could do three books of Horace's odes—but was not quite sure about the *Ars Poetica*. His real difficulty would be the mathematics. He must set to work at them at once. So he sat up over Euclid—fell asleep over it—set his book alight—burned all the corner of his table, and so scared himself that he did not repeat the offence of trying to read up for his examination. No wonder, then, that he was a little nervous, and peered anxiously into the quadrangle as the fatal hour approached.

Yes! they were coming towards staircase No. 3. But it might be for Brotherton, who had rooms overhead. Brotherton, commonly known as "Chicken Broth" in College on

account of his whiteness and the quantity of bone there was about him, was generally considered a pretty safe man. He had worked himself into an unparalleled state of whiteness and boniness in preparing for the Schools, and was looked upon as a certain pass. That he was not quite so sure himself was evident from the fact that he had put his name down as Hoskins Brotherton, thereby gaining a few extra days to prepare for *vivâ voce* examination, H coming on for that trying ordeal several days after B.

But the testamur we have watched fluttering in the hands of the tall undergraduate all along the High and down St. Ald's is not for "Chicken Broth." That estimable youth was plucked like his sponsorial chicken, and had to communicate the unpleasant fact to the old cock at home and the maternal hen, who clucked very pathetically over it, and

declared that there must have been a conspiracy among the examiners. But there was not. What was in fault was the system. The College possessed a master and three resident fellows,. who were called tutors. These gentlemen gave lectures in the morning, which everybody cut as long as it was possible, and paid no attention to when it wasn't, Beyond this the tutors took no interest at all in the lads at their College.

Yes they did, though; they took an interest in the shape of tutor's fees for the work they didn't do! Those men who could afford it employed private tutors, or "coaches," as they were called. Those who could not afford it, like poor Chicken Broth, had to find their way as best they could, and this unhappy fellow had run his head against a wall.

Edward Harding had the advantage of his elder brother's experience. James Harding was a scholar of Trinity, who was at this time reading for honours in Moderations, so he was able to assist his brother—whenever his brother was inclined to accept assistance. He had, at all events, been able to prime him for certain stock questions, and to give him odd bits of information which old University men understand fully.

In rushed the noisy party, then, headed by Tom Friston—called Tom because his name was really Walter—and there was more shouting, and a good deal of dancing, and a general shaking of hands.

"Congratulate you, old boy!"

"By Jove! I can tell you fellows I was in a pretty scare about it."

"Yes, I know you were. I saw you looking very blue when I peeped into the

schools. Gave you second papers, didn't they?"

"Yes, in Euclid and arithmetic. I never could collar mathematics. But I'd the most awful bit of luck in the world."

"What was that, old chap?"

"Why, they gave me a blessed proposition to do that I hadn't the vaguest notion of—something about the squares of the sides subtending the right angle being—oh, bother, you know. Well, I couldn't do it—but I thought I'd evolve it out of my inner consciousness, as the newspaper chaps say—and when I'd done it I took it up, and little Furness said I might go out for an hour. Out I went, met my brother Jim, and told him all about the angles subtending the what's-his-name. Well, he set to work to show me how I ought to have done it, and by the merest chance in the world, not having any-

thing better to do, I listened to him, for you know Jim is a little prosy and given to talk shop. When I went back into the schools—whatdoyou think?—up comes old Fiery Furness, and says he, 'We've lost your second Euclid paper, and must get you to do it again!' And I did, and did it all right too."

"What a fluke!" remarks Jack Kingston—better known in Denb. Coll. as "Young Cider," on account of his habit of having consignments of that refreshing beverage from his native county of Somerset. "Look here, you chaps, it's half-an-hour to chapel; have some beer."

No objection being made to this proposal, Harding puts his head out of a window that looks into the back quad and shouts "Keen!" with all his might. "Sir!" is responded from some remote locality, and presently Keen makes his appearance. A shining,

apple-faced man, with a good-tempered smile is Keen, always civil and obliging—a very king of "scouts."

"Yes, sir!" says Keen, coming into the room.

"Bring in the pewter and some bottles of Bass. And I say, Keen, if you'll look in the bin under the window you'll find a bottle of wine, which is your property."

Keen knows what that means, and says—

"Thankee, sir. I'm sure I'm very glad to hear it, sir. Don't like any of my gentlemen not to get through."

"Well, then, you'd better not ask after Mr. Brotherton," says Tom Friston.

"What, ain't he through, sir? I'm sorry to hear that—and he have worked hard, too. That was the only thing as troubled me. Now, if he'd worked like Mr. Harding here!" —and there's a roguish twinkle in Keen's

eye as he says this. Whereupon Edward Harding catches up the pewter which the scout has just placed on the table, as if with the intention of throwing it at Keen, but changes his mind and takes a pull of beer instead.

"You go and be hanged, Keen!" he says laughing.

"Thankee, sir," says Keen.

It was a peculiarity of Keen's always to say "Thank you," no matter what you said to him. He probably considered it to be the famous soft answer guaranteed to turn away wrath. Edward Harding used to declare that if he had shouted to Keen and brought him from the farther end of the College only to tell him he was an old fool, Keen would have said "Thankee, sir!" with the most imperturbable good-nature.

Presently the door opens, and James Harding walks in.

"Well, Ted, all right, I suppose?"

"All right, Jim."

"Congratulate you, old fellow!"

"Well, I've to thank you for it, Jim, to a great extent." And then he repeats the story about the lost paper and the proposition about the angles and the sides. He never seems tired of repeating that story, and is as pleased at his bit of luck as if it were something he had done himself and had a right to be proud of.

The chapel bell is beginning to ring now, and men in boating costume come hurrying into quad and rush up their respective staircases, it not being considered correct to appear at afternoon chapel in flannels, though I have heard of a nightgown, a comforter, and a pair of trousers being held quite full dress enough for morning chapel.

Edward Harding and his brother are left

almost alone now, most of the men going to their rooms to get ready for chapel or dinner. Edward is at the window, evidently looking for somebody. He has not to wait long. A little fellow in boating costume comes running into College, rushes straight across quad, and bounces into the room.

"All right, Ted?"

"All right, Tom!"

"Hooray!" and Tom Martindale proceeds at once to perform a wild *pas d'extase*. Tom Martindale is Edward Harding's especial chum. He is a neat, dapper little man, as strong and wiry as a bull-terrier, and full of pluck to the backbone. He has been rowing bow in the Torpid for the last week, none of the freshmen being, as he says, "strong enough for the place."

Tom Martindale is one of those men who do well everything they undertake. He is

not desperately devoted to any particular pursuit, but is good at anything. He has undertaken to row in the boat until they can find or train a man for the place, not because he delights in being "bucketed" to Sandford and back at goodness knows how many strokes a minute, but because it is for the credit of the College. Denb. Coll. has held a high place on the river for several years now, and William Kingstone, the skipper, who is the main cause of the success, attributes it to his having got a crew together to practise early. So Tom Martindale, who is not in training, consents to be a martyr to the College honour, and gets into the boat with seven oarsmen trained to perfection, and allows himself to be called on for "spurts," and "a little more steadiness in the bows," and, in short, to be generally bullied by the coxswain, as if he (Tom Mar-

tindale) were only allowed to row by special favour, and ought to be made to feel it.

But, in spite of the rowing—which you may pronounce as rhyming with "show" or cow," just as you please, for either will do, the Denbigh coxswain being a stinger, and no mistake—Tom Martindale was not so much exhausted that he could not execute a masterly double shuffle in honour of Edward Harding's passing Responsions.

"Have a pull of beer, Tom?"

"Not at all," said Martindale, burying his head in the tankard, and emerging two minutes afterwards gasping and almost speechless.

"Edward Harding, you're an unfeeling brute. Your testamur renders you oblivious of the commonest feelings of humanity. How dare you give bottled Bass, or any sort of

beer, in this unlimited manner to the bow in the Torpid?"

"I don't think bow in the Torpid required much pressing."

"Perhaps he did, and perhaps he didn't. But I can tell you one thing. You know Iffley Lasher? Well, about two strokes and a half this side of that coming up, bow in the Denbigh Torpid had a very vivid and penitent recollection of two helps of lobster salad and a long pull of spiced ale, which light repast was partaken of in the rooms, and at the suggestion of Edward Harding, whom the examiners would most assuredly have plucked for conduct so revolting to a well-ordered mind if bow in the Denbigh Torpid had not kindly concealed the damning fact in his own excruciated bosom."

"Thomas Martindale e Coll. Denb., nothing but the reflection that there is a dis-

parity in our sizes, combined with the fact that you have parents whom I respect, although I have never seen, and whose grey hairs——"

"The governor wears a wig," interjects Tom.

"Irreverent scoffer! whose wigs, then, I should be sorry to bring down in sorrow to this University, in order to be present at the inquest—nothing but this consideration prevents me from at once and for ever knocking your head off!"

"If you do, I'll ask your big brother to punch yours."

At this moment Keen appears with a jug of hot water.

"I've took yours up to your room, Mr. Martindale; and it's a quarter past five, sir."

"All right, Keen—I'll be there in a twinkling."

"Thankee, sir."

"Jim, you'll dine with me, I suppose?" says Edward.

"Well, I've promised Martin of our place to go over some logic with him."

"Oh, nonsense! I shan't pass Smalls again in a hurry, and I may never pass anything else, so you may as well give yourself a holiday this once. Besides, think of 'Chicken Broth' getting ploughed after all his work, and then look on this picture. I'll tell you what, Jim—if you go on reading you'll never take honours, you may depend upon it!"

James accordingly consents to dine with his brother, and Edward gives "a wine" afterwards in honour of the event of his examination. And then Tom Martindale gives a supper, in spite of the remonstrances of the coxswain, who declares Tom

won't "pull his own boot-laces" to-morrow.

The evening passes with fun and jollity, and there is no particular harm done, except that a few choice spirits, just before going to bed, are moved to play off a harmless practical joke. Under the window of one of the tutors there was a very large lamp—one which lit the whole of the "Old Quad," in fact, but which had been extinguished, long before the supper broke up, by the porter. Having ascertained that that functionary was sound asleep—somebody said there was no doubt about the "sound," for you could hear him snoring for miles—the choice spirits very quietly got out the porter's ladder, and, setting it against the lamp, climbed up, and with some oil paints, belonging to Tom Martindale, adorned it by inscribing on one side in very large, solid letters, "GOOD BEDS," and on the other "BILLIARDS AND POOL," with

the usual insignia—the cross cues and billiard-balls.

This adornment was not of a strictly collegiate character, and caused some amusement, as may be imagined, to the morning chapel-goers.

Of course the authorities suspected Tom Martindale and Edward Harding, but they could not bring anything home to them; indeed Keen, being examined, gave such strong testimony to their incapability of doing anything of the sort, that the Dons hardly knew what to believe.

You will have guessed from this that Tom Martindale and Edward Harding were stanch friends. They were, in fact, almost inseparable. In mischief or out of mischief, at lecture or hall, on road or river, they were always together, like two brothers—indeed, more affectionate and attached than

many brothers are. They were well known in the University and the City, by Town and Gown, and were so seldom seen apart that some wag had christened them the "Siamese Twins."

CHAPTER II.

THE LOAN OF AN UMBRELLA.

"TUMMUS, friend of my soul, put on your four-and-ninepenny beaver, and accompany yours in all sincerity for a walk," said Edward Harding, coming into Tom Martindale's rooms.

Tom was sitting in an easy-chair, with his dog on his knees. Tom Martindale's dog was a "feature," to use a peculiar but significant form of speech. It was a Blenheim spaniel, with very silky hair and beautiful eyes, and was full of intelligence. At the mention of

the word "walk" it pricked up its ears and wagged its tail.

"Well," said its master, "if you and Phyllis both say so, my only chance is to obey. Whither bound, O philosopher?"

"Anywhere you like. I want to go to Ryman's about some pictures——"

"And when you have bowed down in the house of Ryman, what then?"

"Why, I'm game to go where you like."

"On my head and my eyes, O sultan!—only that would be a painful mode of progression. But look here, Ned, seriously: I've got a lazy fit to-day, so if you're for a twenty-miler I shan't go."

"Oh, I don't want to go far—only just for an appetite!"

"Well, if that's what you want, I know exactly where to look for it, for I saw one on a particular bench in Magdalen Walk."

"You lazy beggar, Tom! I see your little plan. But never mind—come along! Here's your hat. I'll brush you. There, now you're splendiferous!"

"Stop a minute! This philosopher is not going out such a fine day as this without his umbrella."

"*Fine* day! Why, surely you don't want an umbrella on a *fine* day?"

"Ted, I've always considered your education neglected, but I did not think you were such a donkey. Have the goodness to observe that umbrella! Every fold of that magnificent machine is as symmetrically arranged as the fluting on a Corinthian column! Observe its tenuity. Now, do you think I should take such a masterpiece out when the weather was *not* fine? Why, I should have to open it!"

Harding burst into a loud laugh, in which

Tom joined, and they descended the stairs, Phyllis following them in high glee, but not venturing to express her delight audibly. It is a rule—and I think a bad one—at Oxford, that men should not keep dogs in college. I have a notion that the companionship of a well-bred, intelligent dog would be of great service to some young men—at all events if they could appreciate good example. I think it's a very good sign of a youngster if he has a favourite dog.

Tom Martindale was very fond of Phyllis, and she simply worshipped him with all her intelligent nature. Her presence in college was not altogether unknown to the authorities, for she had been seen coming in and out of the gates by the dons, but they did not say anything as a rule. To be sure, old Venning, when he got angry with Tom, sometines had recourse to the anti-canine

law as a *dernier ressort.* "You don't know your lecture, Mr. Martindale—don't, know your lecture!" he would say. Tom explained that he had been ill, and had sent in an "æger." "Well, you haven't read up to-day's lecture, you know!" Tom remonstrated that, having been unwell on the previous day, he could not, of course, be expected to have prepared any work. "But you never know your lectures, Mr. Martindale, you know—you never know your lectures!" Tom objected to generalities, and asked for a particular instance, whereupon Mr. Venning, driven into a figurative corner, wound up with the unanswerable remark, "Well, you keep a dog in college, you know—you keep a dog in college—and I'll sconce you!" by which he meant that he should fine him.

Tom had trained Phyllis to run in and out of college alone, he himself following at his

leisure, and at such a distance that he could not be clearly proved as belonging to the dog. The only indiscretion Phyllis ever committed during her University career was sitting one fine morning on the window-ledge of Tom's room, just as everybody was coming out of chapel; on which occasion she was seen by the Master, who sent the porter to turn her out of college. The porter, however, was so charmed by Tom's affability, his sherry, and a five-shilling piece, that the Master's orders entirely escaped his memory.

Edward, Tom, and Phyllis took the air pleasantly. They went along the High, where Edward transacted his business at Ryman's, then strolled on to Magdalen, and sitting on a bench overlooking the Cherwell, gave themselves up to cigars and meditation.

They did not observe that the sky was

gradually darkening, and it was only when the first warning drops of rain came pattering down on the leaves that they were aware of an approaching storm. They at once jumped up and made off, intending to take shelter either in some Magdalen friend's rooms or in the cloisters. The rain came faster and heavier, and they were just breaking into a canter when they came round a corner of the walk upon two young ladies in very charming spring attire, vainly trying to shelter themselves and their dainty bonnets under a very inadequate tree, which was hardly in leaf. Edward snatched Tom's umbrella from his hand in a minute, despite a smothered "Hang it, Tom, don't be a fool!"

"What! and beauty in distress, Tom? Shame on the man who under such circumstances refuses to unfurl his ægis!"

Prrit! and the engine was opened. Tom groaned.

"Allow me to offer you this umbrella, ladies."

"Oh, you're very kind," said one of them —"but what will you do?"

"Nothing," said Edward with great gravity, "could have induced my friend to open this umbrella but the hope that it might be of use to you—he wouldn't have done it for me if it had rained tangible cats and actual dogs. Pray don't disappoint him."

The girls laughed, and accepted his offer. They were both young—both pretty—and they were very good-tempered, and did not give themselves airs. It was plain that they were not what I suppose, for want of any other term, I must call "ladies." They were the daughters of some well-to-do tradesman, Tom thought. The two friends

walked with them to the gates, and made themselves as agreeable as they could. As they were about to separate, one of the girls asked how they were to return the umbrella.

"Does anybody ever return umbrellas?" asked Edward.

"You're very generous with other people's property," said the young lady, smiling; "but how *are* we to return the umbrella?"

"Ah, how?" said Edward, putting on a puzzled air.

Tom had not said much during their brief interview, but he had singled out one of the girls for his special attentions. He now broke silence with a suggestion—

"I dare say you often come to Magdalen Walk for a stroll, and we shall no doubt meet again; or—or we can appoint a time."

"Oh, we often come here—papa lives in

St. Thomas's, just over the bridge, and this is a favourite walk."

"Well, suppose I and my friend come to-morrow, and see if you happen to be walking there?"

"Oh, we'll come, if it's only to prove to your sceptical friend that people do return umbrellas."

"I'll believe when I see it," said Edward Harding; "and I can only add, I shall rejoice in the occasion that gives me the opportunity."

All this was very wrong, no doubt—wasn't it, reader mine? But, you see, there really was no harm in it. Young folks will be young, and lads will like the society of lasses. It has always seemed to me that one of the worst features of Oxford life is the want of the one thing which civilises and refines young men—the influence of the society

of good and pure women. They will—if they are worth anything at all—have some sort of female society—will make friends of the girls behind the counters or at the tavern-bars. Or they make acquaintances as these two lads have just done, and the acquaintance is carried on in a clandestine manner, which is injurious to both parties. "Think of all the falling in love there would be!" I hear some one say; "think of all the ill-assorted attachments." To which I reply that there would be no more love-making than there is now, and of a healthier sort, not being underhand or surreptitious. And as to the ill-assorted attachments, I can only say that there are worse things that happen than that under the present system. It is unwholesome and unnatural. Where so many young lads are thrown together—good, bad, and indifferent—there ought to

be the correcting influence of female society. I firmly believe that it would do away with very much that is shameful and sinful in our Universities, and would be exerted just at the right time while the lads are young and haven't lost all the freshness and innocence of boyhood.

Edward and Tom met their new acquaintances in Magdalen Walk next day, according to arrangement, for the return of the umbrella. And then they met them the next, when there was no umbrella to return, and so on—and so on.

They learned that the object of Tom's special admiration was a visitor to Oxford. Her name was Mary Freshfield, and she was a governess by profession. She had been an old schoolfellow of her friend Emily Prior's, who was the daughter of the butler of St. Benedict's College, and who often had

"dear Mary" to stay with her, she told the lads, whenever she was not engaged.

I am afraid I must own that it was a desperate flirtation—but it was an innocent one. I must say that the two boys were exceedingly daring in the manner in which they carried on what they called "spooning." They actually used to have the audacity to watch papa off to college, and then they would go to the house and spend the evening with tea and music until it was time for papa to come home. They were very cosy, pleasant evenings, and I believe they all enjoyed them. I am sure the girls used to listen anxiously for the sound of a musical instrument something like a complicated "musical pear," such as you may buy at fairs, but which Edward dignified by the name of "dulcimer," and on which he used to speak softly, as a signal for admission.

Edward, Tom, Phyllis, and the dulcimer became constant visitors to Mr. Prior's, though without his knowledge. But such audacity was not to go on undiscovered for ever.

One evening—whether Mr. Prior was late or the lads were early, I cannot say—or whether some kind neighbours had been taking notes, and were kind enough to tell the good gentleman—but he was still at home when the pair arrived with the dulcimer and began a soft serenade. Finding that music had no charms, Tom pronounced that the two young ladies were napping, so he threw a small pebble at the window, whereupon out pounced Mr. Prior, and Tom, Edward, dulcimer, and Phyllis had to vanish. Luckily Mr. Prior had to turn back for his hat before he could go in pursuit; so the lads jumped a hedge, took across country, turned back, and worked round to the house

again. Mary and Emily were at the door in a state of terrible alarm, and the latter announced that "papa" had gone in pursuit of the offenders.

"Oh, well, then, he's quite safe now, so we'll just step in and rest after our exertions; poor Phyllis is not in good condition, and has suffered considerably from the burst," said Tom.

"Oh, but you must not come in to-night! Papa might come back!"

"Not a bit of it," said Edward. "He must be in College by this time—fancy the whole of St. Benedict's kept waiting for its beer because Mr. Prior hasn't got an ear for music, and can't appreciate the dulcimer." And he was going to give a proof of the harmonious capabilities of that instrument, but was checked by Tom, who would not suffer the performance, and asked Mary

Freshfield to give them a little music, so that his friend might learn what music was.

So Mary sat down at the piano, and Emily made tea, and the fright was quite forgotten in a short time. Emily Prior was a few years older than Mary Freshfield, and she had lived at Oxford from a child, so that she was a little more knowing than her friend. She had heard of instances of Oxford girls making very good matches out of flirtations with young fellows at College, and she did not see why she should not be among the lucky ones. She laid herself out at once to catch Edward, and as he was young and inexperienced she had not much difficulty in it. They were "engaged" before they had known each other a week, though Edward did not tell Tom.

Tom and Mary Freshfield did not make fierce love, but they bantered one another

and flirted without any pretence of seriousness. But Mary's bright eyes and merry laugh and her saucy curls made a deeper impression on Tom than he chose to admit even to himself.

As for Mary, after Tom was gone of an evening there used to come a very grave and sad look into her eyes. I think she knew what she had done. She had for the fun and frolic of the thing been playing with Cupid's darts, and had scratched her finger. It was a slight scratch, but the deed was done. She might laugh, and joke, and tease Tom as much as she pleased, but when she was alone her thoughts of him were very tender, and she used to sigh, which I take it is a sign that she was suffering the pleasant pain of a first love.

Why is it that we will deceive ourselves and one another in this way? Here were

Edward and Emily making all sorts of solemn protestations of affection and regard —and they did not care about one another a bit. And here were Tom and Mary, who really loved one another, trifling with their best feelings, and jesting about a true passion. Cross-purposes is one of the most popular games in the world.

One would have thought that their narrow escape from Mr. Prior would have made our two friends cautious for the future. Not a bit of it! At their usual hour, having finished their sherry, they lit their cigars and sauntered off along the High. How it was that they never were caught by the proctor, I won't pretend to say, but for weeks they had taken that same walk to Mr. Prior's, cigar in mouth, and night after night they had returned to College, making night lovely with snatches of

melody on the dulcimer, or songs, and on no occasion had the appearance of "the policeman in velvet sleeves" interfered with this display of youth and high spirits.

On this memorable night, as usual, they arrived, unquestioned, at Mr. Prior's. But that worthy, warned by the events of the previous night, had handed over the key of the buttery and his authority to the under-butler, and had determined to stop at home for the evening. You may imagine that the two girls were in a pretty state of mind. They tried to send out the servant, who held a retaining fee from the two lads, to warn them, but Mr. Prior was quite equal to the occasion, and forbade her leaving the house.

A melancholy squeak of the dulcimer anon told of the arrival of the friends. Mr. Prior immediately put on his hat, and, very

much to their astonishment, walked out, prepared for a pursuit. Tom and Edward felt it would be undignified to run, so they sauntered along easily, as if bent on taking a stroll. But Mr. Prior was not to be shaken off so easily. He took a stroll too. And when Tom in a stage whisper suggested that they had taken a sufficient constitutional, and might as well turn back, Mr. Prior turned back too. The lads had the advantage of him in coolness, though, for when, as they passed him, he began to address them, Tom told him that he had not had the honour of being introduced to him, and was not in the habit of making chance acquaintances—a speech which, as you may suppose, did not improve his temper. He tried to set the policeman on Magdalen Bridge on their track, thinking they might try to run away, but that func-

tionary was far too well acquainted with the generosity of the lads to enter into his views. So Mr. Prior had nothing to do but to grumble and follow.

Tom and Edward were rather undecided as to the right course to pursue. To bolt was, of course, the first idea that presented itself, but was immediately rejected. "If they must come to sorrow," said Tom, "let them do so in the full possession of their senses and their breath." The next notion was to knock-in at another College to see a friend, but that they felt was dangerous. Prior was well known, no doubt, to porters and scouts universally, and they would aid him to run them down. So they marched on like Spartans with Phyllis trotting quietly at their heels, until in the distance they saw a proctor with Brown the marshal, and a

few "bull-dogs" in attendance, coming towards them.

"What now, Tom?" said Ted.

"Leave it to me, and do as I do."

When they met the proctor, Tom stopped and raised his cap, Edward copying him. The proctor looked a little surprised, and stopped too.

"There's a person," said Tom, quietly and respectfully, "who is following us with the apparent idea that he has some complaint against us. Would you be good enough to investigate the question?"

Mr. Prior had by this time come up, and laid his grievance before the proctor.

"Oh! this is Mr. Prior, sir!" said the officious marshal, "butler of St. Benedict's—most respectable person, sir."

The proctor looked at our two friends.

"These are Mr. Martindale and Mr. Hard-

ing, of Denbigh, sir," added the marshal; and Tom and Edward could not help feeling that he was a great being, for they had neither of them come in his way before, and he must have known their names by instinct.

"You must call on me to-morrow at ten, gentlemen," said the proctor; and, touching his cap, hurried on, followed by the marshal and his retainers, slouching and slinking after him like so many footsore curs.

How any gentleman and clergyman of the Church of England can undertake the proctorship is to me a thing impossible to explain. It must be a most degrading duty. To say nothing of the low neighbourhoods he has to scour, and the undignified work he has to do, it must be a really fatiguing task to perambulate the city at all hours of the day and night. And then to think of a reverend gentleman running as hard as he

can after some silly boy who shows him a clean pair of heels after some knavish trick ! It is too absurd.

Tom and Edward, after parting with the proctor, went straight to college, where they talked the matter over calmly to the accompaniment of a pipe, and went to bed early, in order to be up in time for the interview next day.

CHAPTER III.

A PEEP AT A PROCTOR AND A PLUNGE FROM A PUNT.

THE careful Keen had a nice cosy breakfast ready in Tom Martindale's rooms at half-past eight, and he managed to get the two friends up in time to take it comfortably, and have a quarter of an hour to spare for a pipe after it. This was a wise precaution of Keen's, for the lads—it is no use to conceal the fact—had a wholesome awe of the "policeman in velvet sleeves," and required some fortifying for the interview.

The whole story of the escapade was laid before Keen by Edward Harding, and Keen, after animadverting on the conduct of old Prior in rather severe terms, pronounced that the proctor would only "gate" them——that is, confine them to college after nine o'clock. It was not a severe punishment to expect, but it was an irksome one.

At a quarter to ten, as Tom was just thinking of lighting another pipe, Keen made his appearance.

"Time to be going, sir."

"Oh, bother!" said Tom fiercely.

"Thank you, sir," said the imperturbable Keen.

But he did not leave the room. He got the caps and gowns ready, and went into the sort of butler's pantry attached to the room, and known at the University as "the scout's hole." He made it evident that he

was going to see the pair off, so there was nothing for it but for them to don their academicals and start.

"Good morning, sir. Good morning, Mr. Martindale. Wish you well through it, gentlemen."

So off went the pair up St. Ald's, and along the High and into Radcliffe Square—going back, in short, along the route which was taken by the testamur we tracked in the first chapter.

When they got near Brasenose gates they began to feel just a thought nervous and uncomfortable.

"Tom Martindale, don't be a donkey," said that worthy to himself aloud, but with a glance at Harding as if to include him in the exhortation.

"You've never been to the proctor before, have you, Tom?" asked Harding.

"Well, no, or else I suppose I should not be alive to tell the tale, to judge from your frightened face, Ted!"

"Oh, yes! Perhaps you're not feeling queer yourself. But here we are!"

So the two turned in at Brasenose gate, the quaint and nasally-disproportioned little gilt head on which seemed to Tom to wink wickedly as he passed the wicket.

"Where are the senior proctor's rooms?" they asked of the porter, a majestic being, one of the greatest of his race in days when Banting was unknown.

The giant—he was a giant laterally, not in altitude—directed them. As he did so, Harding fancied he caught sight of old Prior in the porter's lodge, and he told Tom so as they entered the quadrangle in the centre of which stands the celebrated group that Tradition, in uncertainty as to whether it repre-

sents Samson and a Philistine, or Cain and Abel, has obligingly consented to call "Samson and Abel."

"Tom, there's old Prior in the lodge."

"Shall we go and punch his head?"

"Well, perhaps we had better see the proctor first?"

"Here's No. 5 staircase—first flight, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then here goes!" and Tom led the way to the proctor's rooms. He knocked at the door, and was told to enter. He did so, followed by Harding. The room was very dark, which was not unpleasant under the circumstances. The walls were panelled, like many of the rooms in Brasenose, and there were only two smallish windows with heavy stone frames which kept out the light.

A formal "Good morning" on both sides

opened the proceedings, and then the proctor, with a politeness not usually shown by proctors to undergraduates, told the two to take seats—an invitation they were not sorry to avail themselves of, for, like all young Englishmen, they were almost defenceless when on their legs—that is, in a verbal contest, of course. The proctor looked at them, and then, referring to a slip of paper on the table, said—

"Mr. Martindale"—Tom bowed—"and Mr. Harding?"—Edward made a slight inclination. The proctor cleared his throat and began rather nervously, "Gentlemen, I have had Mr. Prior here this morning"—the two exchanged glances; yes, they would punch his head!—"and he complains to me of a system of annoyance you have been pursuing towards his daughter and a young lady who is staying at his house. He says

that you follow them about when they are walking, and as they return from church."

This was rather startling news for our friends. It seems old Prior had confounded them with some other University men who had done this, and the confusion stood the pair in good stead.

"I can assure you, sir," said Tom Martindale, with emphasis, "that we have never followed the ladies about in the walks or from church. There must be some mistake." And he looked at Harding.

"There is not the slightest foundation for such a statement, sir," said Harding, taking the hint. He saw the proctor was a little taken aback by their evident earnestness, and he added, "We were under the impression that the person was not quite sober last night, but this mistake explains his excitement."

"It does not explain your presence at his house last night. You must remember this is not the first time he observed you loitering about there."

"We frequently stroll in that direction for a walk after dinner," said Tom.

"That is just what Mr. Prior complains of. You are recognised, I must tell you, by your having a small white dog with you. Is not that so?"

They did not answer.

"Is it a part of your after-dinner constitutional, gentlemen, to play on some musical instrument, and to throw pebbles at people's windows?"

There was no denying those facts. Harding could hardly repress a smile when he thought of the dulcimer.

"Well, gentlemen," said the proctor, after a pause, "I see you do not deny the

latter part of the charge as you did the former."

"We didn't follow the girls about?" blurted out Harding.

"Ah! I see!" said the proctor, smiling. "Possibly there was no persecution in the case. I suppose that the young ladies, in short, were as much to blame as yourselves. Is that the defence?"

But Tom and Edward were much too gallant gentlemen to shelter themselves behind that excuse, so they held their tongues, and left the proctor to draw his own conclusions.

After a short pause that dignitary addressed them in the following words:—

"Well, you must promise me, gentlemen, not to repeat this. Will you give me your words not to go to Mr. Prior's house again, or interfere with his household?"

The pair consented—of course with the mental reservation that Mr. Prior's "household" meant only those who were in the house, and did not extend to those who happened to be out for a walk.

"I need hardly tell you, gentlemen, that any breach of this promise will be severely punished. As I understand from the marshal that this is your first offence, and as it is rather in the nature of an indiscretion than a crime, I shall say no more to you. Good morning, gentlemen."

"Thank you, sir; good morning," said the pair, and away they went, so delighted at having got off so easily that they forgot all about the "punching of Prior's head," which they had predetermined.

As they turned out of Brasenose they met James Harding.

"'Who are these,'" cried he, "'so wither-

ed and so wild in their attire?' Where have you been?"

"Why, you see, Jim," said his brother, "the senior proctor having heard a great deal about the Siamese Twins, was anxious to see them, so he asked us up to breakfast——"

"The fact is, Harding," broke in Tom Martindale, "Samson and Abel are about to vacate on a retiring pension, and he wanted to know if we would take the post —I should say pedestal."

"I suppose if the truth were told you two fellows have been getting into a scrape, eh?"

"I say, Tom, isn't he intelligent?" said Edward, appealing gravely to his companion.

"Intelligent, young man, is not the word," answered Martindale with solemnity.

"What's the adjective from Œdipus?" looking at James Harding.

"Can't say."

"Poor beggar!" said Tom in a stage whisper to Edward, "reading for honours, and doesn't know that Œdipodes is the patronynic of the word in question: he's a safe gulf!" by which he meant that instead of taking honours Harding would only obtain a pass. Then he continued aloud, "He's Œdipodal—that's what he is."

"It does not want an Œdipus to guess what has happened to two young persons who come out of the senior proctor's college in cap and gown at this time of the morning, and look as white as their shirt-collars," said James Harding.

Thereupon Tom Martindale assumes an air of great mystery—looks round suspiciously—creeps on tiptoe, after the manner of

stage villains, to Brasenose gate—rejoins his companions in a stealthy manner—looks round once more with a searching gaze, shading his eyes with his hand—and finally whispers hoarsely into James Harding's ear—

"Right you are!"

"Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Well, no; only a lecture."

"What had you been doing?"

"Oh! 'infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem.' As you're in for honours, you of course don't know the translation of that, which is—I quote Pope's version—'pity the sorrows of a poor old man,' whose narrative is a great deal too long, as the monkey said when he bit his friend's tail off——"

"Look here, Tom, we shall be too late for the dean's Georgic lecture if we stop any longer," said Edward. "Come down and

lunch or dine with me, Jim, and you shall hear all about it."

"Come and dine with him, that's a good chap, because I'm going to dine at University with an uncle of mine who is a fellow, and this tender blossom will be lonely without its Martindale."

"Very well, Ted, I'll be down to dinner; but don't ask any fellows to wine, because I want to have a talk with you. I had a letter from the trustees to-day that I want to discuss with you. Good-bye for the present."

The Hardings had been left orphans at an early age, and had been educated by trustees, with whom James had got on fairly enough, but between whom and Edward a perpetual warfare was going on with regard to money matters.

"Talking of letters," said Tom Martin-

dale, as he and Edward parted from James Harding, "I've had a letter from the governor, and he says we're likely to go to war with Russia."

"By Jove, you don't say so! How I wish I had gone into the army, as I wanted to do, but those confounded trustees wouldn't let me. They said it would be too expensive, and swallow up all the funds. I wonder what they'll say when my ticks go in, eh?"

"Ted, you have lately got into a bad way of moralising about your debts, which is a sign of a failing intellect. Thinking about them won't pay them, and it makes you dull company, so prithee abjure—abjure!"

"That's fine philosophy for you, Tom, with a governor who's an Assistant Under-Secretary, and who, being accustomed, by a long career under government, to lavish ex-

penditure, will not take particular notice of your little accounts. If you had a partner in a bank and a crusty old city merchant for trustees, you would not regard your ticks with such equanimity."

"My dear Ted, you never will be a philosopher, in spite of my example, and the dean's logic lecture. You appear to forget that one of the maxims of Solomon—or somebody or other—is, 'Always put off till to-morrow what you don't want to do to-day.' If you don't act up to that you will bring disgrace upon yourself and misery upon your friends, and never marry and live happily ever afterwards."

"I wish I had your good spirits, Tom. *Apropos* of marriage, what about Mary and Emily? How can we manage to see them without going to the house? It won't do to write."

"Calm yourself, my child; you shall behold the object of your young affections this afternoon."

"Hullo! is Tom Martindale among the magicians?"

"No; but he has his wits about him. It appears to me that the girls will be just as anxious to hear about us as we are to hear about them. Under the circumstances, they will bethink them where they are most likely to meet us, and they will at once decide——"

"On Magdalen walks, of course! By Jove! Tom, you are really a sharp fellow! I should never have thought of that."

"Be silent, flatterer! What I propose is to take a punt and go up the Cherwell, in case old Prior or the proctor should think of watching us. In that case, our going boating will throw them off the scent. But,

I say, it's just on the stroke of eleven! We must double down St. Ald's or we shall be late, and hurt the dean's feelings."

In the afternoon, as soon as lunch was over, Tom and Edward made their way to the river.

"Where's that light punt of yours, Harvey?" said Tom to one of the watermen.

"It's lying t'other side of Bossom's barge, sir. Just jump in, and I'll put you into her. She won a match for Mr. Sargerson of Balliol yesterday, sir. There ain't a better punt on the river!"

"She is a good one, Harvey; but she's a little wild to steer."

"Not if you *can* punt, sir, she ain't."

"Come, I'll punt you any day, Harvey, if you'll give me a fair start."

"Lor' bless you, sir, I wouldn't rob you! But you can punt, you can; I was only a-

saying so yesterday. Are you going down to see the fours this afternoon?"

"No; I did not know there was a race on."

"Oh, and it'll be a good one, too, sir. I see one four a-practising yesterday; it was real beautiful. They had always one oar out of the four in the water, and the cox-swain kep' up a fountain with the rudder quite splendid."

They both laughed at this description of the boat, and having by this time reached the punt, stepped into it and unmoored it. Tom Martindale deposited himself and Phyllis in the stern on the cushions, and Edward assumed the punt-pole.

I think there is no lovelier stream in all England than the dear old Cherwell. It was just the beginning of summer, and the trees were all in fresh green leaf in Christ-

church Meadows, and the Botanical Gardens were looking neat and bright as our friends pushed over the shallows and passed on to Magdalen Bridge, through the arches of which they could see the trees in the Walk bending full-foliaged boughs down till they dipped in the stream.

Many a drowsy pleasant afternoon had Tom and Edward spent in the punt moored under those drooping branches, with a bottle of claret hung over her side in the cool water, and with some favourite book of poetry or a good novel. There was one spot especially pleasant, where the may was in fuller bloom than elsewhere, and the shade was deeper. Here they moored, and, landing, went up to the walk and reconnoitred.

As they had conjectured, Mary and Emily were there. They soon spied the lads, and

came towards them. They were in a terrible state of fright about the events of the previous evening; but Tom told the story with so much humour, and the termination was so harmless, that they soon dismissed their fears. Arrangements were made for carrying on a correspondence, and plans laid for future meetings, and a regular code of signals was established. The girls, however, did not dare stay long, for Mr. Prior had made them say where they were going before they left the house, and they had told a fib, and said they were going to see a friend who lived in Holywell, so that they must hurry on there at once.

When they were gone, the lads jumped into the punt again.

"What's to be done now, Tom?"

"Let's stop here."

"Oh, hang it!—without any claret or a book? Impossible!"

"Well, then, since you are so confoundedly proud of your punting, suppose we go and see the fours Harvey was talking about?"

"I'll punt down if you'll punt up."

"Edward Harding, I feel it my duty to discourage at once any symptoms of a mercantile and commercial nature. You ought to know better, with the example of your two trustees before you. Punt, and parley not."

Edward Harding was a good punter, and they were speedily pushing along by the Berkshire shore towards The Gut. Just as they had passed through that purgatory of inexperienced steersmen, the clouds, which had been gathering overhead unobserved, began to discharge their contents in big deliberate drops.

"Shove along, Ted. Make for the house-

boat there." There was a barge moored along-shore a little further on. "We can take shelter there. It's only a shower."

Harding went alongside, and they moored the punt to the barge and jumped in. They found Harvey and another waterman inside.

"Just in time, Mr. Martindale. We're going to have a soaker. I hope they'll stop them fours till it's over, or we shan't see much of the fun."

"It can't last long," said Tom, "they're such whacking big drops," for by this time the rain was beating down in torrents, pattering against the window and on the roof of the boat-house, and making the river hiss again as it lashed its surface.

Tom and Edward lit a cigar each, and handed one to Harvey, who took it with delight and gratitude.

Before long the rain died away a bit. The

air brightened, the storm had passed, and it was only the tail of the shower now.

"Hark!" said Harvey. "Here they come!"

They listened. There was a noise of distant shouting, and presently the steady roll of the oars in the rowlocks. They went outside and looked down the river. Two four-oared boats were coming up at full swing, a little crowd of men running along the bank and cheering.

The first boat had not a great lead, which must have been owing to a bad start, for the crew were pulling well together and steadily, whereas the second boat was "all wild and anywhere," as Tom described it.

All at once, as the boats were about a hundred yards from the barge, there was a sudden cry, and a stop in the running crowd, and then those in the barge saw that

the second boat had capsized, and all the crew were in the water.

Harvey and the other waterman sprang into their punt in a minute, and pushed off. Tom snatched up Phyllis, and sprang into his punt, followed by Edward.

"Go ahead, Ted, for dear life!" said Tom, standing up in the punt and rapidly divesting himself of his jacket, and waistcoat, and boots. Edward punted with all his strength. The light craft shot ahead of the heavier one in which Harvey was, and Tom couldn't help shouting to him, "Lor' bless you, I wouldn't rob you of your money." But Harvey only shook his head, and punted away with all vigour.

As soon as the stroke of the leading boat saw the accident that had happened to the second, he cried out, "Hold her all!" and every oar was plunged into the water, but

the way on her was too strong to be checked easily.

"Back her down! Back her down! Quick!" cried the captain.

But by the time all this was done, Edward and Tom were on the scene. The crowd on the bank did little or nothing. A few ran off to fetch the life-preserver which hung on a post a little way off; but they tumbled over one another, and all pulled at the belt different ways. Others got into the river up to their waists, which was courageous, but useless, for they couldn't swim, and the drowning men were out in the middle of the stream.

All this happened in far less time than it takes to write it. The coxswain of the capsized boat was able to swim ashore. The four oarsmen, either ignorant of the art of swimming, or out of breath with their

exertions, were in imminent danger of drowning.

As soon as the punt neared the scene of the upset, Tom jumped over, and struck out towards the nearest man. He was followed, I must tell you, by Phyllis, whose affection for her master overcame her dislike of water. Edward had to pull her into the punt again, and hold her. This prevented him from backing up Tom as much as he might otherwise have done, for you can't punt well in deep water with one hand. Luckily, however, the four had backed up in time for Tom to put the first man he came up with to hang on by the side of the boat. Then he struck out to the next, and brought him alongside, not without some difficulty, for he was nearly gone, and it was difficult work to get hold of him safely. When he had brought him alongside of the

four, Tom looked for the third man, caught him as he rose for the third time, and made towards the boat with him. As he did so he glanced round for the fourth, but he had been thrown the life-belt by this time, and was being pulled ashore. Tom was not sorry for this, for he was a little tired, and his wet clothes were heavy. As it happened, however, he had brought both the men he had picked up to the same side of the four, and she was a little out of trim in consequence. If he had caught hold too, she must have capsized. But Tom was a good swimmer; so he quietly dived under the boat, and, coming up on the other side, hung on by the side, and restored the equilibrium.

"Now paddle ashore quietly, please," said Tom, a little out of breath, but quite collected.

When he got ashore you may be sure he was loudly cheered, and he was heartily thanked by the men he had preserved. The popularity made him a little uncomfortable. He only shook himself like a Newfoundland dog, shouted to Edward to "put Lolo ashore and punt back to Oxford," and then, accompanied by Phyllis, he set off at a smart trot up the bank. The capsized crew went to Iffley, as being nearer than Oxford, and Tom was loudly advised to do the same, but he said he had to go out to dinner, and it would make him late.

"Well, Tom," said Edward, when he reached college, and found his friend taking a glass of "brandy-and-water, hot, and one cigar," as he described it, "you are the coolest card I know. You've just saved three chaps' lives and earned the Humane Society's medal, and you come back quietly and sit

down as if nothing had happened. I'll bet you haven't even told Keen."

"I told Keen that you had upset me, and that I had given you such a licking for it that you had been conveyed to the hospital. But what's the good of making a fuss? I just happen to know how to swim, and did nothing that anybody couldn't have done."

"You've saved three fellows' lives——"

"And you saved Lolo's, for she would certainly have been drowned unnoticed if you hadn't caught her up. Phyllis, my dear, at your time of life you ought to know better than to fancy you could swim ashore with a damp undergraduate in your teeth, because you're not big enough."

And Tom roared at his own notion, Phyllis looking at him blandly, and wagging her tail lazily, as much as to say, "Go on, I'm used to your nonsense."

At this moment Keen entered the room.

"Glad to see you out of hospital so soon, sir," said he, grinning. "No bones broke, I hope?"

"Keen, you're a donkey," said Edward.

"Thank you, sir," said Keen, quite civilly and by instinct.

"I didn't upset him at all. There was a boat capsized just beyond The Gut, and Mr. Martindale jumped over and saved three lives, Keen. What do you think of that?"

"You don't say so, sir? Now that's noble, that is. Mr. Martindale, sir, you'll excuse my saying as it's noble, sir."

"I sha'n't excuse anything of the sort, Keen," answered Tom, blushing like a girl. "And if you go on in this way I declare I won't jump in after you, if ever I see you in the water."

"Thank you, sir."

"Quite welcome, Keen—and I'll keep my word. And now just take me up some hot water, for I must go to dress. And I say, Ted, as you won't have me to look after you, just you be on your guard, and don't let that wild brother of yours lead you into mischief. Good-bye, old chap, I'll look in when I come back."

CHAPTER IV.

OXFORD TICKS.

"I SAY, Jim," said Edward as he and his brother came out of hall after dinner, "I might as well ask one or two fellows in to wine."

"No, don't!" was the answer. "It's no good trying to cut this business, Ted. Sooner or later it must be done, and the sooner the better."

"Very well," yielded Edward, with a sigh, but he hoped devoutly that some one would drop in unasked. There were several men in college who seldom or never

gave any entertainments themselves, but who dropped in uninvited on other men in the most genial manner. There were Lipsall, and Weigcombe, and Jones, who was called "Jejune," three men that took special delight in calling on their friends, and never being at home themselves. Edward would have been glad to see any one of them on this occasion, but they stayed away when they were wanted.

Keen brought out the dessert and wine, and made the brothers comfortable, and then went out and "sported the oak" by James's directions.

Edward filled his brother's glass, and then his own, which he emptied nervously at one gulp, and then refilled.

"Well, Jim, what's the matter with the governors? I hope old Wisby's bank has broken, not to mention his neck, and that

Slowman has been plucked for the mayoralty."

"Don't be naughty, Ted, or I shall have to give you a lesson in singlestick," said his brother, good-naturedly.

James Harding was a very kindly fellow, and he was placed in a difficult position, being several years Edward's senior, and held by the trustees to be in some way responsible for Edward's behaviour, as if he stood *in loco parentis*. Some brothers might have swayed a father's authority over Edward, but James was not the sort of man. He was too quiet and modest. I think Edward would have played the part with far greater success.

"Before we go into business, though, Ted, just tell me what scrape you were in with the proctor."

With some hesitation and a little reticence,

especially as to his position towards Emily Prior, Edward recounted to his brother the history of the acquaintance and its result. James shook his head.

"My dear Ted, do mind what you are doing. I know I have a gentleman for a brother, but this is dangerous work. Suppose this flirtation should end seriously for the girl! It is very possible. Girls in that position are easily fascinated by a man who has the taste and education of a gentleman, especially if he is not exactly ugly—and you are not quite that, Ted. Then, again, these Oxford girls are some of them old hands at this sort of thing, and know how to catch a husband. You may be hooked without thinking. Do mind what you're after."

"Well, Jim, I don't say it is exactly a flirtation. She is a very charming girl, and if you knew her I am sure you would like

her. She's very superior to her station in life."

"Pooh! nonsense, Ted! You don't mean to tell me you are seriously smitten? How romantic! Don't you find the St. Benedict's ale almost like nectar because her father draws it? But there, don't look savage, Ted. I couldn't help it. The notion was so funny."

He saw that Edward was a little nettled at his joking, and he had the good sense to feel that opposition would only make matters worse. He had been at the University long enough to know that calf-love, like the measles, breaks out there at times, and passes off without injuring the constitution.

"Come, I won't tease you any more, Ted; so just give me a weed, and let's begin business."

Edward produced his cigars, and each

lit one, and they sat smoking in silence for some minutes. At last James Harding commenced the conversation.

"You know, Ted, I never pry into your affairs of my own free will—in fact, I have never done it at all yet. But Mr. Wisby has written me one of his business notes, saying that you have told him that you owe a considerable sum of money in Oxford, and that you wish it paid."

"Why didn't he write to me, and send me the money, instead of bothering you? I hate the whole business, and don't want to have any correspondence or bother about it. If they won't pay the money they needn't. I'll take my name off and enlist."

"You'd get heartily sick of that, Ted, in a very short time. One of our fellows did it, but he was pretty glad to be bought off and sent back to finish his time at Skim-

mery. It was terribly hard work and bad pay,—but the sort of men he had to associate with very soon sickened him of soldiering."

"Oh, well, there are lots of other things a fellow can do. I won't be pestered and badgered about the ticks. It's my own money, at any rate."

"My dear Ted, I'm afraid you are something like I was when I came up—you know nothing about money or the value of it. I remember, when they sent me up to matriculate with about thirty or forty pounds in my pocket, I had never seen so much money in all my life before, and thought I could never get through it; but I did very soon, and had a great many bills to pay at the end of my first year, for I was awfully extravagant."

"Yes, I have had all that preached to

me by Wisby and Slowman; but then, you see, Jim, your extravagance took one line —books and pictures—while mine has been a sort of universal genius. I've got about six or eight hundred pounds' worth of ticks—and I've got nothing to show for it."

"You're buying experience very dear, my boy," said James gravely; "I'm afraid you're given to promiscuous hospitality. Rooms on the ground floor are very dangerous for a fellow who's generous and open-handed. You've always a glass of wine or a bottle of beer and a cigar for any fellow that drops in, and every one drops in on the ground floor. If there's only a flight of twenty stairs, men care less to run the chance of your being out or the oak being sported."

"Well, I do have a lot of fellows drop-

ping in, as you say. But one can't help being popular."

"Popular, Ted! It's your wine that's popular. It's your cigars that are favourites. If you have to dock your expenditure —and you'll have to do it, Ted, too, and to some tune—you'll soon find your popularity on the wane."

"You're an old cynic, Jim; much learning doth make you morose. I'm sure chaps would do anything for me."

"Wait and see. I know a little more of University friendship than you do. I have seen Friendship fly out of the window when Economy came in at the door. The child is father to the man, Ted, and though it is not nice, it is true that the boys here at the University are every bit as worldly and selfish very often as their seniors, engaged in the bustle of life."

"Don't moralise, Jim, there's a dear," says Edward, and he laughs, but does not feel easy. "Would you like to write that down? It might be useful for a sermon."

His brother shakes his fist at him, smiling kindly.

"Ted, you're incorrigible. You must hear reason."

"I hate lectures of any sort, Jim—ask the Dons. So do deal gently with me."

"Well, perhaps the kindest way to get out of this position, Ted, is to tell you the whole at once, without any further preamble. The trustees wish to know the full extent of your liabilities. They say they cannot get you to the point in writing, and want me to ask you. You need not tell me if you don't like, for I have no right in the world to ask you. But I think, if you choose to tell me, I can advise you for the

best. I know a good deal about these difficulties, for I have helped two of our men through such scrapes with the home authorities. But do just as you like, Ted, dear, because I shan't mind if you say no, because I've no right——"

"Yes, you have a right, Jim—every right. You have been a thundering good brother to me, a deal better than I deserve, and I've long wanted to talk it over with you. Only somehow one hates to think it over by oneself, much more to talk about it."

"It's the only way to get out of the mess, my boy."

"I know I've been a fool, Jim, and gone ahead much too fast. But it isn't altogether my fault. The temptations are very strong."

"I know them, my boy. The first day I

set foot in Oxford, after I had passed my matriculation examination, and was going before the Vice-Chancellor, I went to a shop in the High to buy a cap. The tailor positively wouldn't let me pay for it, until I threatened to leave the shop, and not take it. I only wish I had always acted with the same determination."

"Oh! it's so jolly to have anything in the world you have a fancy for, only just by saying 'Send it in,' and giving your name and college."

"Well, when I'm Vice-Chancellor, Ted, I'll reform all that. I'll discommons any tradesman who lets a bill run beyond a term. 'Square up every vac., or no more goods'—that should be the motto."

"Well, when you're Vice-Chancellor, Jim, I'll send my son to Oxford—but not before—unless I am found to be heir-apparent to

Golconda, or the nearest of kin to Fortunatus, with the immediate reversion of the magic purse."

"That won't be just yet, Ted; and I'm afraid you won't find your creditors willing to wait until then. So pending Golconda and the magic purse, what will cover your debts here?"

Edward mused a bit. He had made out "a full and complete" list a week ago, but since then had discovered that it fell a great deal short of fulness and completeness, for he had remembered half-a-dozen more bills than it contained—bills which, though individually small, somehow led to the carrying of a big figure into the second column of the addition sum.

"Well, Jim, at a rough guess, I should say six or seven hundred—or eight at the outside."

"Or nine or ten, eh? I know how deceptive such calculations are. On such a large sum I'm afraid two hundred is about a fair shot at the amount you have underestimated."

"By Jove! I hope not, Jim, or I shall have to take my name off the books, for that's about all I have in the world now. If it would only leave me a margin of two or three hundred pounds, that would just keep me here until I took up my degree—I'd work awfully hard, Jim, that I would, to make up for lost time."

"Well, we must see. Have you got a list of your bills? If so, we'll go over them, and see what they come to."

Edward fetched out his list, and the brothers went over it carefully. Then James took a mental tour about Oxford, up one street and down another, mentioning the

shops in each street, and asking his brother if he had bills at them. By this method of exhaustion they soon added to the number of creditors, and by the time the last street and the last shop were named, the figures were a little over rather than under the amount that James Harding had set down as the probable limit.

"Now, Ted, will you leave this matter entirely in my hands? I can settle it with the trustees more quickly and with less row than you."

His brother was very grateful for the offer, and was equally profuse in protestations as to what he would do, and how steady he would be, and how determined he was to have no more bills.

James Harding scarcely dared to hope that these good resolutions would be stronger than those of many a young fellow whom

he had heard registering the same vows, and seen immediately afterwards breaking them.

CHAPTER V.

BREAKFAST-TABLE TALK.

NOT long after Edward and James Harding had settled about the debts, Tom Martindale came in. He was in high spirits. His uncle had heard from good authority that war with Russia was imminent, and he had proposed to Tom to get him a commission if he liked. There was nothing that could have delighted Tom more. His father had sent him to the University with a view to his going to the bar, but Tom's was not a legal mind, and, indeed, not that of a student

of any sort. He hated work, and was in every way a lazy man, though you would hardly have thought so if you had seen him playing at cricket, or rowing, or anything of that sort. But the truth was, he had a naturally idle disposition; in short, was exactly cut out for a soldier, whether in time of peace or time of war. His uncle was a shrewd old fellow, and knew more of the world than most dons at Oxford do. How should they, poor high-and-dry hulks, freighted down with ancient languages and logic, and debarred from the ordinary and the best relations of life—monks of learning, hermits of erudition with a dead language for a *caput mortuum*, and wearing the hair shirt of enforced and irksome bachelordom?

Tom's uncle had been sent to Oxford against his wishes, and had become a fellow to escape what he thought a greater evil—

the family living. He saw what Tom was suited for, and now that the opportunity came, was determined to carry the point and get his nephew into the army.

Tom was in high glee, and the rest of the evening passed very merrily. Edward felt relieved of an incubus by his brother's undertaking to arrange for the settlement of his debts. So these two rattled on, and laughed and joked, and played small harmless practical jokes off on one another, little heeding James Harding, who was rather quiet and reserved, and did not in his turn heed them very much, but sat gazing into the fire and smoking contemplatively. By Tom-toll he left for his own college, and Edward and Martindale went to a supper in college, where the latter was received with immense applause for his courageous conduct in saving the crew of the capsized boat, and became

the hero of the evening, being conveyed to his own rooms at the close of the proceedings in a chair carried on the shoulders of a noisy and not too steady crowd.

"Popularity, Ted," he remarked when he was safely in his own rooms and the noisy crowd had at last dispersed, making the quiet college ring with all sorts of whoops and cries—"popularity, Ted, may be charming, but it is risky. Because fellows think I saved a life or so this morning, I don't see why they should want to break my neck to-night; they couldn't have done more if I'd committed a murder. They nearly dropped me twenty times, and finished up by almost braining me against the top of the doorway of my own staircase."

"You're an ungrateful wretch," said Ted, "so good-night!"

"Good-night, old boy."

88983

So these two lads turned in and went to sleep.

When James Harding reached his own rooms, he sat down and went over his brother's bills again. He made an extract from the list, writing down on a sheet of paper a number of bills which amounted to upwards of a couple of hundred pounds, and which were bills for cigars, jewelry, and such luxuries as would be most likely to arouse the anger of the trustees. Then he copied out the remaining bills on another sheet of paper, which he enclosed to Mr. Wisby, with a letter advising him to settle with as little delay as possible, and assuring him that they were all that were unpaid.

The next day he went to his own bank and drew enough to settle all the accounts in the extract he had made; and then he

went and paid them, having been deputed to do so, as he told the tradesmen, by his brother's trustees.

I have told you that the brothers had been left a sum of money a-piece. James had somewhat shrunk his in his first year, but had learned wisdom, and lived more carefully now. Nevertheless, when he drew the two hundred and odd, to pay his brother's debt, he left himself only just enough to carry him to his degree.

Mr. Wisby and Mr. Slowman shook their heads over the statement of Edward's debts. They clucked and croaked with a hundred hen-and-frog-power. They wrote him long and serious letters on extravagance and folly, and the certain results of such conduct. But there was one thing they did not do. They did not take James's advice, and pay the bills at once. The result was that the

tradesmen began to dun Edward, and he had to order more things of them to keep them quiet. In this way, by the time the "two men of business" in London had made up their minds to send the money, Edward had begun to build up another pile of debt. And the worst of it was, that when the trustees had paid the first batch of bills, they had only just enough left in their hands to keep Edward at college, provided he exhibited the strictest economy, and passed his two examinations at the very first chance.

Let our story tell itself, however. The accounts were sent in to Edward's trustees, and he, naturally enough, supposed that they would be settled, and so troubled himself very little about them, except when some dun became a little too pertinacious. Then Edward wrote a reminder to "the governors," and went and ordered a lot more

goods in from the troublesome creditor, taking the opportunity of telling him he was daily expecting a cheque from his trustees.

Meanwhile, although the dog and dulcimer no longer revisited the glimpses of the moon in St. Thomas's, Emily Prior and Mary Freshfield found that the air on the Eynsham Road was particularly pleasant, and chose the Witham fields, especially, for their constitutionals. About this time Edward Harding and Tom Martindale suddenly developed an unusual aptitude for pedestrian exercise. As I have told you, these young gentlemen had hitherto preferred a drive, or a punt, or a saunter in the city of Oxford, to long rambles in the neighbourhood. Now, however, they extended their walks, and, by an odd coincidence, their favourite stroll was along the Seven-bridge Road towards the Witham fields. Under these circumstances

it was not extraordinary that they should frequently meet the girls, and, having met them, should join them, and wander away across the meadows—Tom and Mary in front, laughing and joking merrily, and Edward and Emily behind, arm-in- arm, talking that delicious nonsense which is the language of young lovers.

One morning towards the end of term, as Edward Harding was just finishing his toilet on his return from morning chapel, Tom came bounding into the room.

"Ted! Hullo! ain't you up yet?" This from the sitting-room.

"Up? Rather! Why, I've been to chapel, where you ought to have been, if a proper and respectable bringing-up, and the companionship of a well-conducted man like myself were not altogether wasted on you!" was the answer from the bedroom.

"You'd better finish tying your scarf, Ted. I know that's what your mind is occupied with, you're talking such rubbish. Look sharp, though, there's a good fellow, for I've news to tell you."

"Well, tell on, your servant heareth!"

"Oh, bother! Not till you come out and sit down to your breakfast."

"Here I am, then!" said Ted, issuing from the bedroom.

"And how resplendent! That Rob Roy tartan scarf is one of those quiet unassuming things which become you, and which you have always the good taste to choose. And as for that parting, especially at the back, Ted, it could not have been straighter if you had been Spierised."

"You seem in high spirits, T. M. What has happened? Has the governor been told to form a Ministry, and has he ap-

pointed you Secretary for Foreign Affairs?"

"Not exactly that, but something almost as good. He has got me a commission!"

"The deuce he has! What shall I do when you're gone, Tom?"

"I really can't say—but it's like your brutality to make the most of your opportunity while you have me. Why don't you give me some breakfast?"

"Why don't you help yourself? And so you are going to hang your cap and gown on a willow-tree, and be off to the wars again?"

"Yes!

'Tom Martindale to the wars is gone,
In the Light Dragoons you'll find him,
His father's sword he has girded on—

which is quite within the bounds of possibility, for he was an officer in the Yeomanry, and is a Deputy-Lieutenant—

'And his wild harp slung behind him.'

I add that for rhyme's sake, for although my mother has got a harp—a Clementi too—I don't think she'll give it me as part of my military outfit; and if she did I shouldn't be such a fool as to break my back with it."

And so with a laugh the two lads sat down to breakfast. If we believed appearances we should be inclined to think them easily reconciled to their speedy separation. But the levity was assumed. They were ashamed to let each other see how they felt the step, now that it was irrevocable. While it had been in contemplation they had joked and laughed over it without thinking much about it, but now, face to face with the fact, they were sadder than they cared to confess.

In spite of their attempts, the breakfast was rather a dull one.

"Are you going to the Dean's Georgic lecture?" asked Ted, after a pause, putting down the pewter which Keen brought in at the end of the meal.

"No! not I! If I have only a short time to stay in this region of bliss, I'm not going to waste any of it on the dons. But I'll send up and ask the Dean to excuse me all the same, for he happens to be a gentleman, which is more than you can say for the others, and I won't be rude to him."

"Well, if you don't go, I shan't!"

"Do as you please, Mr. Harding, but don't say I set you a bad example. Lectures, remember, young man, can be of little service to a party who is more likely to be employed in the imminent deadly breach than the observance of the statutes. To a gentleman who is destined to shake the pulpit desk and fulmine over the clerk,

lectures are invaluable, if only to act as a warning against the infliction of long sermons!"

"Come, I'll bet you I'm a bishop before you're a general, although you do seem to think your prospects so brilliant."

"I see the sun of glory arising from the ocean," said Tom, as he took up the pewter to have a pull at the beer.

"Ah, my dear! that's only the pattern of the glass in the bottom of the pewter;" and they both laughed heartily.

The tankard was a quart one, and the bottom was of yellow glass, with a white star cut in it. Since the day when Edward Harding won that cup in the pair-oar race in his first term (it had the college arms and the names of the crew engraved on the side) he had watched that star rise and set a good many times in good wholesome college ale.

They brewed their own ale at Denbigh, and capital ale it was. I wish I had a tun of it here now—don't be shocked, my dear reader! the wish is a modest one. I am not asking for a huge vat of it, but only for one of those quaint little silver cups which they call "tuns" at Denbigh, and which hold about a third of a pint, and have a whistle under the handle that you cannot make use of until you've emptied the cup, and then you may—whistle for more.

Tom Martindale had educated Ted into a preference for the college beer, and it would have been well for them if all the lads had confined their potations to that noble liquor. The stuff which they drank and paid for, or made their relatives pay for, as wine, was poisonous as a rule, and the beer would have done them infinitely more good.

"Ted," said Tom, after he had made the sun rise in remarkably full splendour at the bottom of the tankard—"Ted, why don't you cut the parson and come soldiering with me?"

"Shouldn't I just like it, Tom, that's all! But you see those confounded trustees wouldn't hear of my doing anything else. However, I shall be my own master in another year, and then we'll see!"

"When we come into our estate, eh?"

"Yes, man's estate, that's all."

"Why, that's only liability for debt."

"Don't mention it. I had three polite notes from Sawkins and Hylvester, two demands from Scottinger, the Vice-Chancellor's Court proctor, and about half-a-dozen ticks, with a request that I would attend to them before the end of term, all lying on my table when I came back from chapel."

"You shouldn't have gone to chapel, and then it wouldn't have happened."

"It's pretty clear you haven't been to the logic lecture lately, Tom."

"One fact is worth a thousand arguments, Edward Longshanks. I did *not* go to chapel this morning, and day began for me without any of those dun clouds you complain of. Instead of ticks, I got my commission and an elegant letter from the old boy. By the way, though, talking of letters—give me a sheet of note-paper. I must just drop Mary a line to tell her of it."

Edward set down the pewter which he had taken up, and looked at Tom. Tom blushed, and smoked furiously.

"Hadn't I better open the window, Tom, if you're going to blow like that? I haven't got any blighted geraniums to be benefited by it."

"You're a donkey, Ted; the pipe was nearly out, and I was getting it well alight."

"Indeed, and while the vesuvian was still red-hot in it? That pipe must go out very easily."

"If the pipe doesn't you will, and through the window you have so obligingly opened for that purpose, if you are impertinent."

"I shall not be overawed by military insolence, Cornet Martindale of the Horse Marines. Here—here's the note-paper. Hadn't you better have a sheet of letter-paper to break the intelligence?"

"I'll break your neck, sir, just by way of getting my hand in."

"Oh, these soldiers! what dragons they are!" said Ted, as he walked off towards the window, leaving Tom to write his note to Mary. As he leant on the sill looking

out into the Old Quad, he grew very melancholy when he thought over the coming parting with Tom Martindale. The two had been so much together that they were to a considerable extent isolated from the rest of the men in the college. I think, if the truth were told, the other men did not like this very exclusive friendship—were in a quite unaccountable way jealous of the intimacy. At any rate, Edward felt that when Tom left he should feel almost as friendless as he was when he came up in his first term. He could not repress a sigh. It was echoed. He turned round. Tom had finished his letter, but was still sitting, pen in hand, and with his eyes fixed on vacancy. The involuntary sigh that echoed Edward's had been his. Edward did not quite know how to rouse him from his reverie. He did did not like to speak, so he softly whistled

the air of Moore's delightful song, "Go where glory waits thee."

Tom looked up.

"Why that sigh, Thomas?"

"Did I sigh? I didn't know it——Poor little Mary, she's a jolly little girl!"

"Hullo! why, he's beginning to be spooney about a girl that he is always bantering and bothering when he sees her."

"That's because I am not a good hand at the sentimental twaddle that you entertain Emily with. You talk to her in rhyme, don't you? love and dove, and mine and thine, and Emily and—and—what do you rhyme with Emily, Ted?"

"What do I reason with you, you old muff? But seriously, Tom, do you care for Mary Freshfield?"

"She's the dearest and best little girl in the world!"

"Have you told her so?"

"No. She wouldn't believe me if I did. Somehow we have got into such a habit of chaffing each other that we couldn't say anything sensible or earnest."

"Do you think she cares for you, Tom?"

"How can I tell? I daresay she does, and yet, somehow, I daresay she doesn't."

"Then you've never made love to her?"

"Deuce a bit!"

"And yet you love her?"

"Well, if you put it in that form, upon my soul, Ted, I believe I do. She's the dearest little girl in the world!"

"'Heigho! here we go!' as the poet says. Thomas loved Mary, and never told his love. Edward is engaged to Emily, and, upon my soul, I don't think he cares a dump about her. Such is life."

"That remarkable and original remark of yours is exactly my sentiments. Such is life."

CHAPTER VI.

SOME COMMON-PLACE LOVEMAKING.

"WHERE'S the meet this afternoon, Tom?" asked Edward of his friend on the day after that on which Tom had received the news of his commission.

"At Bagley Wood, Ted. I thought it would not be quite so public as the Witham fields."

"A very wise change. To tell you the truth, I'm getting awfully sick of those eternal fields."

"Oh, the monster! Sick of fields in which he meets his Emily, and sighing for

pastures new! Oh! Edward, Edward"—here Tom assumed a falsetto—"could I have believed this when I gave you my young affections!"

"Look here, Tom, don't joke on that subject. It's deuced unpleasant. Here am I, like a fool, tying myself up to a girl about whom I am caring less and less every day. What am I to do?"

"Tell her the truth."

"Well, you see, I fancy she is really fond of me, poor thing, and so that wouldn't do. No, I must put a bold face on it, and try, if possible to conceal from her the altered state of my feelings."

"Do you know, Ted, I think it would be fairer to her to speak the truth at once. It must come out some day."

"I haven't the courage, Tom. Consider the poor girl's feelings. At any rate, it is

not her fault, and she does not deserve to suffer."

"Go your own way, Ted. Meanwhile, perhaps you had better go and adorn yourself. I told Keen to put some hot water in your room. Make haste, there's a good fellow, because time's short, and it's a fairish step there."

"All right. I'll be ready before you!"

"No, don't!" shouted Tom as he ran upstairs, "for if you do you will not be able to devote all the requisite attention to your toilet; and you do look so nice when you've 'cleaned yourself and put on your things.'"

The two friends were soon ready, Tom Martindale, after all, being ready first, winning, as he said, by a short necktie. It was a standing joke of his against Edward that the latter spent a quarter of an hour tying

his scarf. If he did the result quite compensated for the loss of time, for the way in which Ted arranged his scarf was artistic and symmetrical to a degree. In those days there were none of those ready-made inventions we see in shop-windows now. Men had to tie and fold their own scarves, and skill in so doing was much envied among the lads. Edward was never tired of telling how the incomparable Wayward once produced a cravat of striking pattern from a drawer where he had kept it "purposely for Mr. Harding, because he was a gentleman who did a scarf credit by his tying."

When the lads reached Bagley Wood, they found Emily and Mary awaiting them. Mary was looking pale and worn, Tom remarked, but he did not say anything.

"Now, you children, go and play," said Edward, flinging himself down at the feet

of Emily, who was sitting on a bank. "Stop a moment, though, Tom. Have you got any lights? Thanks! You shall have the box back. Don't quarrel, there's good children."

He lit a cigar, and began talking nonsense to Emily, comparing her cheeks to the dog-roses in the hedge above, and her eyes to what Jean Ingelow has so exquisitely described:—

"A mist of bluebells on the slope and down the dell:"

Edward Harding was a good talker, and, like a good many lazy men, a great reader of poetry, so that he had plenty to say to Emily. She was clever enough to be in a perpetual state of admiration of his talents, and that flattered him into an easy endurance of what but for that would have become by this time very wearisome.

Tom and Mary wandered away through the wood together. They began the con-

versation with an affectation of their old fun and trifling. But as they got beyond hearing of the other two, their tone insensibly changed, and perhaps for the first time since their acquaintance they found themselves talking seriously and earnestly.

"So you are going into the army, Mr. Martindale?" said Mary, half turning away to pick a trail of bindweed.

"'Mr. Martindale.' Hullo! what have I done?"

"Well, Tom, then. There! But I wanted to be serious."

"Can't you be serious without calling me names?"

"Don't be silly, sir."

"I can't help it—indeed I can't. Besides, officers in cavalry regiments are expected to be silly."

"Oh! please don't!" said Mary, very

earnestly, turning to him, and laying a hand on his arm. "We can talk quietly for once, can't we, now you're going away?"

"We'll try, at any rate, Mary dear."

As he said that she looked at him inquiringly, as if to satisfy her own mind as to whether he used the adjective mechanically or with a tender meaning.

"Where do you go?"

"Wherever the regiment may happen to be sent. It is to go on active service against Russia—that is all I know."

"What, going to the war?" asked Mary, stopping suddenly and turning very pale.

"Why, my dear child, it's only because of the war that I enter the army!"

"Yes; but I thought—that is, I was told—that officers had to go to some home battalion to learn drill and that sort of thing."

"The depot—well, it is usual, I believe, but you see I am an old soldier. I was ensign in our militia at my father's place in Devonshire—and the governor has some interest too!"

"And you are really going out into danger?" she asked in a faint voice.

"Of course; but, hullo! what's the matter? Lean on me. Why, Mary my darling, what's this about?"

She had held up against it for a time as well as she could, but her fortitude had given way at last. The place seemed to turn round with her, and she tottered and would have sunk to the ground but for Tom's arm, which he passed round her waist, leading her to a fallen tree that formed a capital seat, the gnarled roots twining into rude backs and arms.

"My darling girl, tell me, is all this

alarm and distress on my account?

She did not answer, but hid her blushing face in her hands and sobbed.

"Come, come; you must cheer up. Nonsense! there's no danger. Nothing's never in danger, and you've often told me I was nothing."

She looked up, smiling faintly.

"'Nothing to me,' I said," she murmured.

"Was it true?" asked Tom, sinking his voice unconsciously into the same tone as hers.

She looked at him for a moment, and then her eyes filled with tears, and she turned them away, as she answered—

"What should you be? I shall always remember you as a kind friend, and shall recollect how many pleasant hours we have spent together."

"And nothing more, Mary?"

"Nothing more, Tom. But won't you think of me too sometimes?"

"Always, Mary darling. But is there nothing more than this to be? You know what I am going to say"——

She laid her hand on his lips.

"My kind friend Tom, you must not forget that Mary Freshfield is a poor girl—a farmer's daughter—who earns her living as a governess. You are the son of a gentleman of high position and considerable means. That is why we must be very good friends, and nothing more."

"You silly child! do you think I care two brass farthings about position or any of the nonsense you have been talking? There is only one question about it!"

"And that is"——

"Can't you guess, Mary? It is the ques-

tion whether you love me. Will you tell me?"

He seated himself on the tree beside her and drew her towards him. She did not resist, but she kept her face resolutely turned away from him.

"If I tell you, it cannot alter what must be, Tom. Only misery and trouble can come to you if you"——

"Do you love me, Mary?"

"Oh, hush, hush! It cannot do you good to have my answer. I should be a blight on your career—a stumbling-block in your path. The woman who loves a man ought to be a blessing to him—an encouragement"——

"Be that blessing to me, dearest Mary. Tell me—do you love me?"

"Let us go back to the others!" She struggled to get away from him, but he

held her in her place firmly, not roughly.

"Let me go!" she said, in an agitated voice. "I must not stop, or I shall say what I must not say. In pity, let me go!"

"Why?"

"Only harm, and ill, and trouble can come of it, Tom. Let me go!"

"I will, if you'll answer my question."

"You promise?"

"I do. Do you love me, Mary?"

She turned round towards him, half leaning on his shoulder, as he clasped a hand in each of his. He tried to look into her face, but she hid it behind his shoulder as she whispered the very faintest little "Yes" that was ever heard in the world. He folded her in his arms, and planted one long fond kiss on her forehead.

"You said you'd let me go, Tom," she pleaded.

"You couldn't go away, darling, after telling me that. You must hear me tell you how fondly I have loved you since we first met."

The old terror came back into her face.

"Oh, please, please don't! I can't bear to think of it. Oh, to think of how we first became acquainted! We must not—indeed we must not—speak of this any more. Oh, how very terrible this is!" And the big tears came into her eyes again.

"Hush, you foolish child," said Tom, drawing her towards him, and clasping her in his arms, so that her head rested on his shoulder.

"What will come of this?" she asked plaintively, as she lay quite resigned, like a child that has almost cried itself to sleep. He looked down into the soft brown eyes gazing up in his so pleadingly, and his heart

was full of a bliss which no words of mine can tell.

"My own—my darling," he said tenderly, "what can come of it, if we really love one another? Nothing on earth can divide us."

"Oh, Tom, what will your friends say?"

The question was an awkward one. Tom pictured to himself the manner in which his father would hear the announcement of his engagement.

"They won't like it, I know," said Tom, after a pause; "but that can't be helped. They must learn to like it."

But Mary had read his thoughts in the expression of his face.

"Tom, dear Tom, reflect once more. Think of your father's displeasure and the disapprobation of your family. You surely would not pay such a price for a poor silly

little body like me? There, let me go. It has been a pleasant little dream just for the last five minutes. It's over now. Let us never speak of it again."

"Do you think I can resign you so easily as that, Mary? No, not if all the fathers in the world were to be enraged at me. Mine now—mine for ever—mine till death."

She gave a little sigh of happiness and ceased to struggle; and this time, when he bent down to kiss her, her lips met his, and sealed the plight they had taken.

And then Tom began to speak of the future—of the glorious chances which the war would give him. He might defy the anger of his family, should Fortune favour him and give him an opportunity of distinguishing himself in the field. And as he spoke of it he inspired Mary with his own enthusiasm, until they began to think of this

splendid future not as what might be, but as what would be. They did not wonder whether, but when, it would come.

Who does not know the visions of coming greatness, the splendid successes, that young love conjures up? Who has not tasted that delicious intoxication? Who has not seen glimpses of that glorious future? Tom and Mary forgot, in its distant brightness, the dark shade of sorrow and separation that was so near at hand.

"Have you a knife, Tom?" asked Mary at last, when the long silence into which they had fallen, musing on the present and the future, had become almost painful.

"Here it is. What do you want?"

She did not answer him, but, reaching up, severed one of his curly locks, and then, placing the penknife in his hand, held up one of her own ringlets. Tom cut off a

glossy ring or two, and kissed it reverently.

"And now it's getting late, Tom dear, and we must be going home."

"Why does it get late? I've sunshine enough in my heart now to make it day for another twelve hours. Heigho!"

"Shall we tell them, Tom?"

"I shall tell Ted this evening."

"Well, then, I will tell Emily. You know that she and Edward are engaged?"

"Yes; he has told me so."

She stopped for a moment. They had by this time risen, and were walking towards the place where they left Edward and Emily.

"Tom," asked Mary, gravely, standing before him, and looking up into his face, with both her hands laid on his arm—"Tom, I think they have mistaken their feelings towards each other."

Tom nodded.

"You don't think it possible that we have?"

"Nonsense, Mary! Doesn't your heart tell you very differently?"

"Yes, perhaps!" And she smiled tenderly. "However, what I was going to say is that we had better not interfere with them. I mean, if by chance they quarrel and break it off, I don't think we ought to try and bring them together again, though it might be more agreeable for us. I know Emily well, and if they do quarrel she won't ask me to Oxford any more, so that you and I may meet."

"Oho! is that her temperament? Well, Mary, I will tell you this much, that if they do break it off, you and I might try with all our mights to bring about a reconciliation, but I know that one of them would never consent to it."

"Ah! I suspected so. Tom, promise me one thing?"

"A thousand, if you'll only make them things I can do."

"Promise me always to treat me as you used to do before. Don't ever talk to me as he does to her!"

"Law bless you, Mary, Ted's a bit of a poet, and I'm nothing of the sort. Don't be frightened on that score."

They were coming now to the turn in the ride that would bring them in sight of the others. Tom stopped, and threw his arms round Mary once more.

"My own darling, my treasure! Tell me once again—only this once—do you love me?"

She did not answer him in words, but she reached up and drew his face down to hers, and kissed him on the lips. There was

nothing unmaidenly in the action, it was so simply and trustfully done. And as she kissed him she met his loving look with her frank, honest brown eyes.

When they rejoined Edward and Emily, the latter, with a woman's shrewdness, divined at a glance what had taken place.

They all walked homeward together until they were about a mile from Oxford, when they separated, the girls walking some distance in front, the lads following, cigar in mouth, as if just returning from a constitutional.

When they were about half a mile from the town, they met a gig with two persons in it. Tom and Edward saw them nodding to the girls, but thought little of it until they saw that Emily and Mary were thrown into a terrible state of confusion by the encounter. Then, as the gig came nearer,

they were able to understand their embarrassment, for one of its occupants was no other than Mr. Prior himself, the driver being Mr. Copple, the veterinary surgeon, a near neighbour of Prior's, who frequently dropped in for a pipe and glass of grog with him.

"Whew!" whistled Tom, "if old Prior doesn't see through our little game, he's a bigger flat than I take him for."

"Perhaps he doesn't know us again. It was dark, you know, and we haven't got Lolo with us now."

"Oh! he recognised us, I'm certain. I saw the old beggar grin savagely. He has a nice smile, hasn't he? Does Emily take it from her father?"

"Don't be a brute, Tom."

That evening, in Tom's room, Ted heard the story of the plighting of the lovers as

the friends were discussing a bottle of claret. And at night, when Tom went to bed, he remarked to Phyllis, as he tucked her up in the blankets at the foot—

"Lolo, your master's been and gone and popped the question, so your dear old nose is out of joint. But she's very fond of you, lassie."

Phyllis looked up affectionately, and made furtive darts to lick Tom's hand as he arranged the blankets round her.

The next morning Tom came down to Edward Harding with rather a blank face.

"What's the matter now, Tom?"

"Read," said Martindale, thrusting a little pink note into Edward's hand. It ran thus:—

"DEAREST TOM,

"We have had a terrible to-do here this evening. Mr. Prior has accused

me of leading Emily into mischief, and we have had words in consequence. I leave to-morrow; luckily, I had heard of a situation two days ago. Tell Edward that Emily is forbidden to stir out of doors. The servant has been sent away (she is going to post this for me), and Mr. P. vows he will go to the proctor or to the principal of Denb. Coll. I should not be much surprised if he paid Edward a visit, so tell him to be on his guard. Shall I see you again before you go abroad? I am sadly afraid not. I won't tell you where my situation is until I have been there, and seen what the people are like. I leave by the ten fifteen train in the morning. Good-bye, dearest Tom. This isn't a love-letter, is it? But I don't think you'd care about one, so you shan't have one from

"Your own loving MARY."

"That's a pleasant look-out, Tom!"

"What, old Prior's calling? You'd better see him, I fancy."

"I must protect the girl at any price, and I'm afraid, Tom, that it will end by fixing my fetters more firmly! I'm the unluckiest beggar in the world."

"Poor little Mary!" sighed Tom—"back again to that miserable drudgery. Look sharp, old boy, and give me my breakfast, for I must run down to the station and see the poor girl off!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLACK FLAG HUNG OUT.

FROM quiet, learned, semi-monastic Oxford to a huge roaring factory of a midland city is a change indeed. It was the change which came in due time for James Harding, when he had taken his honours, and put on his gown, and found his curacy for a title. For my own very humble part, it has appeared to me at times that an Oxford life is about the worst possible preparation that could be thought of for a cadet of the Church Militant. We don't rear our cadets for the army in the

same way. They have to rough it, and to learn drill, and submit to discipline, and act in miniature the soldier's life they will have to lead. But the lads who are to follow the "drum ecclesiastic" have no such training. Even the most hard-working undergraduate at the University leads a lazy life compared with the real life he will have to lead in the world under any circumstances —and a very lazy life indeed compared with what that of a clergyman anywhere—and most of all in a large manufacturing town—ought to be. I remember with what awe and wonder I regarded an Oxford friend of mine, who, returning on a visit a full-fledged parson before I had completed my career, told me of his duties at L——. The man, whom I remembered the jolliest companion at a feast or a fray, was leading the life of an ascetic, spending his day in

the strongholds of fever and famine, lunching frugally on a biscuit carried in his pocket, and eaten at snatches as he went about on his labours. He was frightfully ill at last—perhaps, for all I know, incapacitated for hard work for life, for he dropped out of sight, as most of your Oxford acquaintances do.

I wonder whether want of training had anything to do with his failure? There are few men who can take up an oar in a racing eight to any purpose without the preliminary discipline.

James Harding took no very high honours. He was a third-class only in Mods, though some had thought—and they were pretty good judges too—that if he missed his first, he would get at least no less than a second. It is not impossible that the distress of mind into which James was thrown by his disco-

very of his brother's difficulties and disagreement with his guardians might have somewhat influenced the result of his reading. At any rate, after getting only a third in Mods, he determined to abandon the idea of reading for honours in Greats. Certain it is, he gave this last as his reason for doing so to his tutors and to those friends who did not consider the first repulse any augury against future success. They had known men who were sent back among the passmen in Mods, and took double firsts in Greats. But I believe James Harding, over and above his disappointment, had another reason for relinquishing any attempt at a class, and bringing his University career to a close as speedily as possible.

We remember the little extract he made from the list of Edward's debts, and the means he took to settle it. His brother,

ignorant of this sacrifice, came, when times began to be hard with him, to James, and borrowed little sums, which he could not immediately repay, and so the impecuniosity of the younger brother was communicated to the elder, and it was this that made him anxious to get away from Oxford as soon as he could.

James, therefore, went in for his last examination at the earliest opportunity, and to his great delight took an honorary fourth in the classical schools, and was complimented by the examiners in law and modern history.

Next to a first-class, I confess that I should like an honorary fourth-class. If a man fags away and reads for bare life for years, when he gets a first-class he gets what he has aimed at and no more. Whereas, if he gets even a second-class, he gets

considerably less. But the man, who aims simply at a pass—who reads for the examination which is a necessity—and then does so well that he is promoted to the classmen, is, to my mind, supremely blessed. To obtain what we try for is an unsatisfactory thing—to win something unexpected is a veritable pleasure. Upon my word, if you press me, I fancy I shall admit directly that I think an honorary fourth is better than a first. But then I must own that I do not think very much of academical honours at any time.

Well, James took his honorary fourth, and put on his bachelor's gown, and then went down into the country and read for ordination. In order to keep his little stock of money intact, he accepted a tutorship to a couple of lads preparing for the University. They were sons of a clergyman with whom

he had become acquainted, but who could not afford to pay very much. However, he interested himself to procure James a title, and at last found him one with an old friend who was incumbent of a church in the large midland manufacturing city of Liverchester.

So to this huge busy place of a thousand chimneys, over which hung a canopy of smoke all day and night, to blacken the palaces of commerce which its wealthy inhabitants were building for themselves everywhere, out of the proceeds of prosperous trade, went the Reverend James Harding, B.A. of Trin: Coll: Oxon.

Before he had been long engaged at his work he found that the palaces of commerce were only a small portion of the city. Behind them and among them ran alleys teeming with poverty, misery, and crime—human sewers disemboguing their horrors at times

under the very nose of Wealth, which then for the first time learnt of their existence, and shuddered. Its first impulse was to give money to cure the evil, because that was the easiest thing it could do. It is astonishing how much of the so-called charity of Wealth is due to this fact. The next impulse was to call in the police. But with the latter mode of dispensing Christian charity we have nothing to do. The management of the funds came for the most part into James's hands.

The vicar under whom James worked had been a good, hard-working man in his day. But now that he had a church and congregation of his own, he felt it his duty to spend much time in the elaboration of his sermons, and the perfecting of his choir and services. It is curious to observe how often a really worthy clergyman gets into the habit of

thinking his sermon the most important thing in the world. There was a time when I used to think that a knowledge of the English language and a good delivery were all that would be necessary for an efficient parson. Although I still consider that a sufficient knowledge of your own tongue, to enable you to read the Lord's Prayer as sense, is highly necessary, I have seen that active virtues are more absolutely requisite than a musical voice, and the judicious use of a gloved hand.

"Are there no good clergymen?" Heaven forbid I should seem to say so! I would rather be understood to say that, considering their training, the number of young men who are divinely shaped—for they get no other schooling—into splendid shepherds is a pure miracle. It is perhaps more than likely that I include among the number of

shepherds—I have selected a name that rather implies activity than palaver-power—a great many whom some pious folk might be inclined to look askance at. I know of fine fellows who give twenty-minute sermons, and go hunting on week-days, and who are on that account loved and respected by their rough parishioners—parsons who do more good than (I don't say talk so much "goody" as) many a "snowy-banded, delicate-handed" gentleman, whose congregation does not despise him only because it cannot understand him.

Is not all this frightfully heterodox? I'm afraid it may seem so, but it is sincere. What do the clergy mean by that purposeless cackle they call Convocation? Why don't they do, instead of talk? What earthly purpose—not to mention heavenly—does it answer for a reverend canon to let

off a "*gravamen* which is subsequently to be made an *articulus cleri* to the effect (or non-effect) that the Lower House sees with pleasure that the Upper House regrets"—something or other. Regrets, and pleasure, and twaddle, with a vast sea of ignorance, and vice, and poverty on every side of them; and that sea, by the way, the deepest in those neighbourhoods where the Church holds property!

There! I have said my say, and hope to be forgiven a little outspoken honesty. I know I shall. I believe that many a toiling curate, many a hard-working servant of the Church, if he should read those words would echo them, and would admit that twenty score Denisons thundering in Convocation are not doing a tithe as much good as one energetic A. C. London did going out to do battle with the Devil in our great populous

city. My dear good Reverend Mellifluous Multiloquent—to return to the more immediate subject suggested by James Harding's new work—you may preach the most splendid sermons, but they don't make your parishioners good Christians half as easily as your wife's soup does, or your curate's poor mite wrung from a niggardly salary.

James Harding fell in with his duties at once. He was no musician, so he could not assist at the choir meetings; and he was not allowed to preach, except occasionally of an afternoon, when there was nobody at church. So he was able to go out into the highways and lanes of the great city. He was horror-struck at his first sight of the misery he found there, and felt inclined to sit down and give it up, if not cry. It was absolutely appalling. But by-and-by he took hea[illegible] grace, and when he once faced th[illegible]

found, like all evils, it was not so terrible as it looked.

He was a gentleman, was our James, and he made a good impression at the outset of his ministrations that stood him in good stead. He never walked into any poor person's house uninvited. Though the front door of the hovel opened boldly into the parlour, he never dreamed of going in until he had learned whether his visit was well-timed and agreeable.

"I shouldn't walk into Mr. McOttengood's without waiting for the footman to ask me," said he to a brother-curate, who seemed surprised at his punctiliousness, "and I consider this poor operative has a right to the privacy of his own room as well as you, or I, or Mr. McOttengood."

And James Harding was right, and the [illegible]le respected him for this consider-

ation. When visitors, ever so intimate, call upon you, my dear reader, they are ushered into a drawing-room reserved specially for company; or if you are above that folly (which I hope you are), before they come into your sitting-room, there are little odds and ends to be set right, something to be pushed under the sofa-cushion, and the butcher's bill to be put into the sideboard-drawer. Why should not poor people have their modest concealments too?

James never had been a dandy like his brother Edward, but he had always dressed well, and wore a heavy and handsome gold chain and watch. Now he wore black, of course; but he laid aside the gold watch and chain, wearing a common silver one on a silk guard.

"It isn't that I'm afraid of losing th[illegible]" he explained; "for though I [illegible]

rough characters about, I don't for a moment believe they would rob me of a halfpenny. But I feel one has no right to go and flout such absolute penury with such unnecessary evidence of being well off. Strictly, I believe one ought to sell such trinkets when one has once discovered the immeasurable amount of distress there is, that can only be relieved by money. But I haven't yet reached that point of self-denial, for the watch was a present from my father, and the chain a birthday gift from my mother."

From morning till night did this worthy fellow toil away in this neglected portion of the vineyard, while some of his fellow-labourers were singing and genuflecting at the more aristocratic end of it.

He was not alone in his good work. The [illegible]holic priests laboured in the same dark [illegible]nd every now and then the gloom

was lighted up by some angel in woman's form, who came to the sick and needy, bringing a blessing and light which no *man* can contrive to diffuse.

Nevertheless, James Harding was one of the most popular among the poor. The veriest shrew lowered her voice when she heard the parson's knock at the door; the roughest vagabond that ever made home a misery assumed a more human demeanour before him. The children squalled and brawled less, and smiled more at the sight of him, and even the curs who snarled and bit at strangers welcomed him with a condescending wag of the tail.

Among the aged and the sick he was almost worshipped. Feeble old creatures, who had scarcely enough vitality left in them to retain any interest in mundane affairs, used to wag their poor old heads with feeble de-

light at his approach; and as for those who were ill—

> "When his hand unbarred the shutter,
> The clammy lips of fever smiled
> The welcome that they could not utter."

Before he had been in his curacy long there were very, very many who welcomed him thus. For that terrible scourge of populous cities, the cholera, was brooding over Liverchester, and the people were down on their straw pallets struggling for their poor lives with the great grim destroyer.

What hosts of ragged little funerals shambled along the lanes and courts at first! But the visitation was too terrible even for that soon, and the wretched coffins were jolted off without a single following mourner, and cast into the yawning pits without the city.

How they fought, these poor creatures!—how they clung to their lives as if their existences were all bliss and competence! How the fathers and mothers sat down by the cold hearths and wept their poor hearts out because there was a little one lying dead and cold on the straw in the corner!—one mouth the less to feed, said Job's comforters. It was wonderful to think that even such miserable beings had ties they were loth to sever, and that love could survive such abject wretchedness.

They hung black flags at the end of the streets at last, wherever the disease was raging worst. Down those lonely, silent streets few people passed. Only the doctor or the minister of God, or perchance some kind woman who was not to be kept back from doing good, even by such a terror as this.

But I must admit that a number of those who in better times had visited the sick and poor, had kept penny clubs, and clothing clubs, and distributed soup-tickets, and Dorcas flannel petticoats and blankets, began to discover that, after all, real charity begins at home—and so stopped there.

There had been a very fine volunteer corps assisting the regular army of the Church Militant in the stricken city while the invader was yet only threatening. As soon as the assailant had made good his lodgment, many of the volunteers began to find it was their duty to defend each his or her own particular hearth and home.

But the little army closed up its ranks gallantly, and fought all the better for the knowledge that the skulkers had gone away on "urgent private affairs."

One of the few volunteers who were not

frightened away by the cholera was a young lady, whose patience and whose earnestness had long been James Harding's admiration. Her name was Prudence Heath, and she was the niece of a large manufacturer in the town. Her parents were dead, and this uncle was her trustee, having charge of her money, but not interfering with her tastes and pursuits.

Those tastes and pursuits were very different from those of her cousins, the Goldings, who loved wealth and display, whereas this meek little woman found her chief delight in going among the poor, teaching, comforting, and assisting, for she was plentifully supplied with pocket-money. Her uncle did not approve of her doings, but did not interfere with them, because he did not care to quarrel with her. She was heiress to a large fortune, which she was

not to receive till her marriage, and not then even, if her trustee disapproved of it. The money had been left in this manner by her father, who, having married for money himself, against the wishes of his parents, and been very wretched, thought he could thus insure his daughter's happiness.

Her uncle entertained the idea of marrying her to his own son, a sickly lad some two years younger than she was. But as yet he had not revealed his scheme, and was only anxious to keep on good terms with her. In the event of her marrying without his consent, half of the property went to charities and half to him, and he naturally wished to keep the whole in the family.

So for long after the trouble fell upon Liverchester, this good little creature, in her modest black gown, with her thick veil, was

to be seen speeding about on errands of mercy through the streets in which the sickness raged most terribly.

But at last she disappeared from the scene. James sighed and shook his head sadly.

"Another false heart—another deserter from our scanty ranks. I'm sorry for it, too, for I thought she was too good and brave for that."

Some month or so after, one day, as James was quitting a hovel where the sickness was at its very worst, he met the quiet little figure in black just entering.

"Ah! Miss Heath, we thought you had deserted. It is very long since you have come among us."

"I have been ill," she said in a low voice.

"I thought that might be it. This sort

of thing makes one nervous, and one fancies all sorts of things till one is laid up."

James spoke this in a tone that seemed to make light of her illness. I think he had not quite forgiven his most promising volunteer's failure in the hour of need.

"My illness was no fancy, Mr. Harding," she answered in the same subdued tone, raising her veil as she spoke.

James started back. Her round, pretty face had often come pleasantly to bring a bit of sunlight to his work. There was no round, plump face now. She was thin and pale, and had evidently suffered terribly.

"Good Heavens! Miss Heath, you must have been dangerously ill indeed. You must not venture among all the sickness yet."

"I must go. I can't stop away any longer now I'm well."

"You are not well yet. And you really need not expose yourself to such danger."

"You expose yourself to it daily."

"It is my duty."

"You would not dare to tell me it is not mine."

James was silent, and suffered her to do as she chose, but his fears were not groundless. In another week he missed the little black figure again, and heard that Miss Heath was dangerously ill, and not expected to live.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE.

IF I took a leap from Oxford to Liverchester in the last chapter, I am going to carry you still farther from those classic shades this time. Time has sped on, the spring of 1854 has given place to the autumn, and in the September of that year—at a time when he had been usually employed in shooting partridges—Tom Martindale, a cornet in the 8th Dragoon Guards, saw, from the slopes above the then unknown little river Alma, the French and English troops carry the heights beyond that stream,

and so impress on the Russian what they could do in the field, that he never stopped to show them fight in the open again.

If you want to know how that battle was fought and won, you must, if you please, refer to Mr. Kinglake's description of it, which, to my mind, is equal to Homer, and brings as distinctly before the reader's eyes the successive movements of that interesting contest, as well as the individual acts of gallantry by which names now familiar as household words were first brought under the public notice.

The 8th Dragoon Guards—a famous regiment, and one which bore on its flag the names of many world-renowned battles—were not engaged at the Alma. They sat out watching the game and fuming. They would have liked to ride up the precipitous banks right into the flaming batteries, if

they had only been allowed. But it was not a contest to be decided by their arm of the service, so they sat out, fidgeting in their saddles, while that glorious "thin red line" —so slender, but so tough—crept up the hillside and drove the Russians before it.

What a fight it was! Splendid not only in its own intrinsic bravery and pluck, but because it was the first victory achieved by British arms (nearer than the fabulous East) since the old days of that great commander, the uncle of our late faithful ally.

Boys who had glowed to read of Waterloo had grown into the men who swept up that deadly slope from the little brook, and made history for other lads to read. Soldiers who had envied the grey-headed veterans that Wellington had commanded, achieved on that hillside experience which future heroes would covet. Those who had

gazed with something like awe upon the old warriors who had tasted combat, found themselves suddenly in the midst of battle.

After the victory came the advance and the flank march, followed by the capture of Balaklava. So far, Tom had only been a spectator. But the time was coming when he was to see more of war.

Tom had taken his farewell of Mary Freshfield and had bidden good-bye to Edward Harding without exactly realising what it was to go into the very jaws of death. When the siege commenced, on the 17th of October, with the memorable roar of a hundred and twenty monstrous pieces of ordnance, replied to by more than an equal number of Russian guns—when the rush of the huge shot and the jar of bursting shells made the atmosphere one vast pervading sound, he began to feel a little

what war was like. And I incline to believe that he wished himself out of it, and small blame to him, for if there be a trying position for a raw soldier in this world, it is being perched in a saddle to be bowled at by cannon-balls, without the slightest chance of retaliation.

His hut was not very far from the Lancaster Gun Battery, and "whistling Dick" was a strange and troublesome neighbour. The cannonade used to begin at early dawn, and Tom used to wake from dreams of going home by the express train to find that the noise of his train was the hurtling of the missiles from his neighbour, "sibillating Richard."

Roused thus early—and for a long time Tom found that when once you were waked by a cannonade it was no use trying to sleep again—he used to sally out and look about

him. Many a lovely morning he saw rise over the eastern hills, many a glorious sunset he saw sink in the west—and between rising and sinking nothing went on but the incessant pounding of the big guns and the ringing pickaxes of the men in the trenches, carrying the works onward down the face of the slope. He found it growing monotonous after a time, and began to think of home and friends.

Before leaving Oxford he had held a long consultation with Edward Harding, and had advised him to leave the University and enter the army. Edward was hardly prepared to take so decided a step, although his debts were plaguing him sadly. Tom, however, gave him a letter of introduction to his father, in case he should alter his mind subsequently, and had requested the "governor" to do what he could to obtain

his friend a commission, should he require it.

If the truth must to told, Tom Martindale was nervously excited to a terrible degree by all this new experience of his, and in spite of its monotony was delighted with it. You see, his excitement was so great, that he found monotonous what others would consider too lively. For instance, I doubt if you or I should be inclined to call a life monotonous which offered the advantage of a possible shot or shell in your tent—not to say your own person—every ten minutes in the day. It seemed so to Tom Martindale, living in a perpetual artificial state of high pressure.

By-and-by there came a new feature of interest into the scene which day after day greeted his eyes as he wandered to his favourite vantage post on the brow of the plateau on which the army was encamped.

In the valley of the Tchernaya there appeared to be gathering by slow degrees an army of Russians, which was, of course, to be hurled against our position sooner or later. With what anxious curiosity, therefore, these troops were watched, not only by Tom, but by a host of gallant fellows tugging in the slips, and longing to be in the fray, may be easily imagined.

Before long there was a sortie made at night against the French trenches, and not without success altogether, for the Russians, passing themselves off as English, contrived to penerate into the lines, and bayonet some of the men at work before their ruse was discovered. After that Tom used of an evening to arm himself with a sword and revolver, and go down and spend a few hours in the English trenches. But the enemy did not attack them.

This desire to kill or to be killed must appear a very curious one to men of peace. It was indeed most inexplicable. Tom used to see men in the early grey of dawn stealing off with their rifles and their rations to some favourite spot whence they could fire at the enemy whenever a man showed. "Where are you going there?" was a frequent question. "I'm going to have a day's Russian-shooting!" was the invariable answer. And yet if, after knocking his bird over, the fortune of war had carried the marksman into the neighbourhood of the wounded foeman, he would have been the first to tend his wounds, and take him carefully to the rear.

In the valley I have spoken of above, and on the low hills at the fork of the defile into two ravines, there was now gathered an army of about thirty thousand Russians,

commanded by Liprandi. It was felt that before long this force would be employed against the English position.

On the 25th of October the movement was made. Morning broke grey and chilly, and with the dawn came a long and sustained fire from the Russian guns, directed against the Turkish outposts. The Scotch Greys, with the Horse Artillery, were thrown forward to answer this challenge, and the field battery, though far inferior in the number and weight of its guns, behaved gallantly, and kept up a shrewish reply to the bluster of the enemy, until forced to retire for want of ammunition. Tom saw the Greys going into action, as he thought, and envied them terribly. But they had nothing to do but support the guns, and came back with them to the Heavy Brigade when the last round had been fired.

And then Tom had no chance to see any more, for it was time to join his own regiment, drawn up in the plain behind the encampment. He began to be conscious that the hour was at hand, and rode down to his men in a state of strange elation, singing snatches of old college songs, and feeling like a schoolboy out for a holiday. He was born a soldier, was Tom.

About this time two massive columns of Russian cavalry advanced upon our position. It was a grand sight to see this great wave of war roll on down one slope and up the next, glittering in the morning sun, and rushing on rapidly to break on the English line.

The outworks—in a very unfinished and sketchy state as yet—were garrisoned by Turks. The pluck with which the Mussulmans had held their mud entrenchments on the Danube had led people to suppose that

their fatalism made them incapable of flight. In this instance the illusion was rudely shattered. No sooner did the Turks in the advanced works see the Russian cavalry pouring down upon them than they let fly a random volley at them, bounded over their earth-works, and came running like deer down the slope. After all, it was not much to be wondered at, for they were fearfully outnumbered, and had no artillery to support them.

The Russians pushed forward still. But now a few guns on the heights opened upon them, and with telling aim. Before the smoke of the first discharge had cleared away, and while the third shot was still booming in the air, one column of the attacking cavalry was seized with a panic—turned—and fled.

Meanwhile, however, the other column

moved on towards our position. It had fine galloping ground, for a plain of level sward stretched before it—smooth as a bowling-green, and walled in on all sides by lofty eminences, from which the French and some of the English divisions looked down upon the conflict.

It was time for our heavy cavalry to be on the alert now, and accordingly the Enniskillens and the Scotch Greys began to move forward. But they were drawn up, as I have said, behind the encampment, and before they had fairly got clear of it, the dark torrent of the enemy's horse was upon them. The odds were immensely against the English cavalry, and the enemy were further assisted by the momentum with which they rushed upon them, not yet free from the entanglement of tent poles and ropes, and picket lines.

Back, back some hundred yards or more, were borne the struggling English troopers, fighting fiercely all the way. The red coats and grey horses showed clearly out in the dark turbulent flood which rolled on, still slower and slower after its meeting with our heavy cavalry.

The 5th Dragoon Guards were coming up to the support of the Greys and Enniskillens.

The 4th Dragoon Guards and the 8th—Tom's regiment—were pressing forward in column past a small vineyard.

Tom was in a burning fever of excitement. He put his horse at the low wall, sprang over, and gathering a hasty handful of grapes, crushed them upon his parched lips. As he leaped into the open space again, a brother officer—an old hand, who had seen service in India—came up to him.

"That's unwise, my boy. You'll want all your horse can do in about a minute."

"So soon?"

"Look!"

He pointed to the plain beyond the vineyard. The head of the Russian column was just passing. Tom could hardly suppress a shout of joy.

The two regiments galloped on, and were soon clear of the vineyard walls. There they halted for a brief space to form, but it seemed an age. At last the necessary extension to the right had been effected, and the moment for the charge had arrived.

The old colonel—a fine grey-headed iron hero of many a fight under the fierce Eastern sun—cast a look along the line. Even the horses seemed fretting at the momentary inaction. There was a clatter and rattle of accountrements and curb-chains as if they

were all on the fret. Then the bugle rang out clear and silvery.

"Now then, men, by——!" cried the old colonel, and they were off.

During that brief delay, if the horses had fretted, the men had been burning with impatience, though the discipline told, and they did not show it outwardly. Some swore in subdued voices from sheer excitement—some gave vent to prayers (more remarkable for fervour than Christian feeling) to be allowed "to go at 'em."

Now they were off. It was dead silence save for the clash of arms and the beat of hoofs.

As they stretched over the turf, Tom remembered experiencing something like the feeling before, and—with his eyes still fixed on the enemy—began to recall the past, and recognised the recollections as that of a

famous charge in old "Town and Gown" days. With his eye still fixed on the enemy, he saw the old scrimmage in the Turl, and the proctor forcing his way through the crowd of "Town" just in time to receive the first charging gownsman in his arms. That gownsman was Tom, and as he thought of it—with his eye still fixed on the enemy —Tom smiled.

And then there was time for no more.

With teeth clenched so fiercely that it seemed as if they were never to be unlocked again—with bosoms swelling with pent-up excitement, and every nerve quivering—the dragoons had thundered over the intervening space, and flung themselves with a sickening crash against the foeman's flank. And as they met the enemy, every man in the 8th Dragoon Guards struck the one great blow—his first stroke in the war—that

he had been dying to deal for ever so long. There were a good many empty saddles on the backs of Russian horses after that, I can tell you.

This was the noted charge of the Heavy Brigade.

The famous mad gallop of the light cavalry a little later in the day has had the fortune to win so much renown—as much for its faults as for its merits—that this gallant encounter I speak of has hardly been spoken of so often or so highly as it deserves. I am not desirous of detracting from the glory of the Light Brigade, purchased at the loss of so many brave fellows, and would not for a moment question the reputation sought and won literally in the cannon's mouth. But the heavy cavalry should have its meed of honour. Broken up into detachments, entangled in the lines of their

own encampment, and meeting the full onward sweep of the enemy ere they themselves could push forward to meet them, our heavy troopers encountered and drove back in irretrievable confusion three times their own number. It was a glorious, a splendid sight for the allies, who, stationed on the heights, watched the contest in the valley below as if it were a game of chess. What would not one give to have seen that sombre, massive column swoop down and swallow up our handful of men, and then, like a wave that collects its forces and flings itself on some rocky point, scatter and break before bravery insurmountable?

While I am writing this I cannot but remember there come warnings of a storm. It is useless to disguise the fact that we and certain of our neighbours (thanks to foolish scruples) have been clenching our fists and

frowning at each other. Between nations, as between men, such demonstrations are not quickly or easy forgotten. I am inclined to think we remember a threat longer than a blow, and, indeed, believe the latter is the only means of removing the impression of the former. The two boys at school who are always saying to each other, "Ah, you do!" or "Just you hit me!" or "Touch me if you dare!" are the two boys who go on hating one another for ever. The two who go off to a retired spot and have their little difference out in a muscularly Christian spirit learn to respect one another, and are not seldom the best and closest of friends afterwards. Do you think that two people who have been sometimes openly, sometimes tacitly or indirectly, taunting each other lately, are likely to make up the difference wholsomely without some blood-

letting? I do not; and therefore it is that I read the page of modern history in which Cornet Martindale and the 8th Dragoon Guards are engaged with immense comfort and satisfaction.

"Ah," our fathers used to say, "look at Waterloo! How often was an overwhelming force hurled against our army, and yet we won! There are no such soldiers now." But when the hour came, our dainty lads left off lounging in the Row and waltzing the "Olga," and officered their men as only young English gentlemen could do; and our country boys left the plough-tail, shouldered the musket, and went to battle as cheerfully as ever they had gone whistling a-field. The charge across the Alma and up the heights beyond—the engagements of our Heavy and Light Brigades—the resistance on the slopes of Inkermann—these all tell the same story

as Waterloo—these record the hardihood and gallantry of Englishmen, rich or poor, low-born or noble; and when we read of these things we can well smile at all threats —ay, and at all sneers—and feel sure that when the hour arrives the old colours that waved above the Belgian cornfields and in the Crimean vineyards will float still, and above as noble hearts and strong arms, wherever the scene of battle may be.

But we must not forget that, while we are talking about what may be hereafter, Tom Martindale and the 8th Dragoon Guards have crossed swords with the enemy for the first time.

Into the flank of the advancing column our brave fellows cut their way in steady line. They buried themselves in the ranks of the foe, and the superiority of numbers could not match the superiority of spirit.

The huge body of Russian cavalry was shaken by the onset of this mere handful of brave men. It was not the weight of troops but the individual gallantry of the soldiers that reckoned here. As the Scotch Greys and the Enniskillens, swallowed up though they were in the column that poured upon them, were driving back their assailants, so the 4th and 8th Dragoon Guards broke up the ranks opposed to them by sheer pluck and dash. Officers and men alike fought like old Homeric heroes—hand to hand, striking for England and for glory, every man a giant.

It was a lancer who met Tom in full career. Tom made a furious slash at the lance that severed its head, and then, having got so near his man as to have no play for his sword, struck him with the hilt in the face and knocked him over the crupper.

Down with the sword again on the next lancer, who parried and returned a blow, which crashed down on Tom's helmet, and made a thousand sparks dance before his eyes, whereupon Tom darted a quick thrust at his enemy's throat, and so a second man went down, and he was prepared for the third—a dragoon like himself this time. With him Tom exchanges two cuts, and then there is a tinkle and a crash, and Tom's sabre has snapped at the hilt. Tom flings the hilt at his enemy's head, draws a pistol from his holster, and blows his brains out.

"Here's a sword, sir," says some one hurriedly, and a private in his regiment riding on his left thrusts a Russian sabre into his hand. Only just in time, for here comes Tom's fourth foeman.

A big dragoon this last foeman of Tom's, with a powerful horse and a tremendous

reach with his big sword, which he swings as if it were a straw. That big sword is hissing through the air to descend on Tom's shoulder, and bring his campaign to an abrupt termination, when the soldier who gave Tom the sabre, having in the interim settled accounts with another lancer, catches sight of his officer's peril. He snatches his pistol from the holster and discharges it in the big Russian's face. He is too late to stop the blow, but just in time to render it powerless to kill. The big sword falls, however, with crushing weight on Tom's right shoulder, and just at the same moment a Russian lancer makes a thrust at him. Tom parries feebly with his disabled arm, and the lance, missing a vital part, tumbles him off his horse. He comes to the ground with a terrific thud, and the lancer, riding over him, makes an amiable attempt

to spit him as he goes, but fails. And then external matters cease for a while to have any interest for Cornet Martindale of the 8th Dragoon Guards.

CHAPTER IX.

DUN CLOUDS.

THE time at length arrived when Edward Harding's amiable trustees, Messrs. Wisby and Slowman, saw fit to pay off his Oxford debts, or rather the list of them which had been sent in by James. For this purpose they employed an accountant, who charged a pleasant percentage, and was an expensive and by no means necessary addition to the outlay. From him the tradespeople learned in some mysterious way that if they wanted to be paid they

had better not give Master Ted any very extensive credit in future.

Now, unfortunately, since the day when that list had been transmitted to the old fogies by James, with a letter entreating their speedy attention, Edward had had ample leisure to heap up around him another pile of debt. At the news conveyed by the accountant this enlivening avalanche swept down upon the lad, and he was in a few short hours inundated with requests for "little accounts." What could he do?

He wrote first to his trustees, having now gathered the courage of despair. The answer he received was conclusive. They had no more money to give him!

It had been bad enough to be dunned when he knew he had the means of paying. But now, when he was informed that the exchequer was quite dry, the trouble and

anxiety became terrible. Day after day the applications became more frequent and more urgent.

At last came the fatal period when Edward's door was besieged by expectant creditors. Representatives of every conceivable trade were to be seen hovering about his "oak." They were used to that sort of work, and mounted guard over his entrance with a dogged determination, which seemed assured that sooner or later the garrison must give in.

Unhappy garrison! How it fumed and fretted at this beleaguering! With blinds drawn down in front, with food furtively supplied at the back windows that looked into the little quad in the rear of the old quad, the garrison entrenched itself, cutting hall and lectures on the score of ill-health. And, indeed, it was suffering from a dis-

order which was extremely prevalent among lads at Oxford.

But this sort of thing could not go on for ever, as the patient duns well knew. A time arrived when Edward grew desperate at the perpetual annoyance, and dressing himself in his best clothes, and with an assumed air of comfort and carelessness, strode out from the besieged doorway into the midst of the knot of patient attendants in waiting.

Then rose a very Babel of entreaties and threats, to all of which Edward could only reply that it was not convenient to pay this term—that he hoped to settle them all next term—that—that—in short, that—anything! —in order just to get rid of his tormentors and clear the passage in front of his rooms. With dissatisfied murmurs and black looks the group of expectants scattered slowly. And then began a new form of siege.

Messrs. Sawkins and Hilvester, having had Mr. Ticker's books placed in their hands for the settlement of outstanding accounts, would be glad to receive the sum of blank pounds, blank shillings, and blank pence, due from Mr. Harding, of Denb. Coll., without delay. Mr. Pincham had been directed by Messrs. Duncan and Candone to apply for their little account, which he would therefore feel obliged to Mr. Harding to remit to him with the least possible delay. And so on—and so on!

In a short time these applications assumed a curt and peremptory form. The money was to be paid in a few days—period named—or the writers would be compelled to take further steps to insure an immediate settlement of their claims.

Finally, Edward became acquainted with the signature of Sconger, the Proctor of the

Vice-Chancellor's Court, wherein, so that functionary informed him, he would be sued at the instigation of Mr. Blank, and Mr. This, and Mr. That, unless he promptly liquidated the debts he had contracted with them.

Edward went to see Sconger, in hopes of talking the matter over with him. Sconger was a member of the University, and Edward thought it possible he might not be a bad sort of fellow. But he was grievously mistaken in his estimate. Sconger was a mangy little cad, who had somehow contrived to crawl through a University career as a taberdar at Queen's, or a scholar at Worcester, or in some equally noble capacity. Now he was a sort of tradesman's bully, and made matters as unpleasant as he could in the Vice-Chancellor's Court to men who had been seduced into extravagance by the very

creditors who clamoured so for a settlement of their accounts.

Edward was treated by Sconger with all the low insolence of an ill-bred dog in office. The creature who made his living out of the misfortunes of University men was not even decently grateful to him for giving him employment. Edward waxed furious, and, turning upon the little sneak, gave him so severe a handling that the proctor shrank into himself, but vowed inwardly to persecute the lad all the more for his pluck! Edward's course was a courageous one, but, I fear, hardly a wise one.

A day or two after his interview he saw reason to prepare for lengthened siege. He laid in a good stock of provisions, liquid and solid, and served out a supply of tobacco sufficient to last out a protracted beleaguerment.

"Keen!"

"Yes, sir."

"Put on an ægar for me. Tell the Dean I am suffering from something or other—a bilious attack. That's about the truth of it, Keen, isn't it? The table looks like it, don't it?" and he pointed to a large and splendid assortment of bills which adorned his breakfast-table.

"Yes, sir, it do."

"And then, Keen, sport the oak, and don't let in a soul, for I'm expecting a citation from the Vice-Chancellor's Court."

"Thank you, sir."

Before long one of the bedels—the officers who carry the silver maces in front of the Vice-Chancellor as he goes forth on his duties, and are therefore styled "silver pokers," as certain court dignitaries are spoken of as "sticks"—made his appearance

in quad. Ted noted his arrival, peeping round the blind, and began to chuckle heartily when he heard him vainly battering his knuckles against the outer door.

The "poker" was in no hurry. Mr. Harding, he thought to himself, would have done reading shortly, and then he would come out and be served with the little slip of paper summoning him before the Court of the Vice-Chancellor to show cause why he did not pay to a certain tradesman a sum of money, to wit, any amount you like, for goods supplied to him.

But Mr. Harding was in no hurry either. He ensconced himself securely, and lived like a fighting-cock, eating, drinking, and smoking to his heart's content, and sallying out at twelve o'clock at night for air and exercise, which he took in the green quadrangle in front of the new buildings.

In this way three days passed, at the end of which time I fancy both bedel and undergrad were pretty well tired of the little game. But the bedel got wearied first, and relinquished the attempt, not without first expressing to Keen, who feigned deep sympathy with him, that he really rather admired the gentleman's obstinacy, adding that it was the first time he had ever been so effectually barred out.

The bedel once gone and fairly out of sight, Ted rushed into quad and executed a wild impromptu *pas d'extase*, to the admiration of many of the men of Denb. Coll., who had watched the progress of the siege with deep interest, and cheered Ted lustily for defeating the common enemy so effectually.

"And now, Keen, I'm off to your place at once."

"Thank you, sir."

"As soon as I'm gone, pack my portmanteau and bring it over, and go round to Bars and tell him to send a Hansom round, to take me to the station in time for the last train to town."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

Thereupon Edward stole out of college and took refuge at Keen's residence, a little house in Denbigh Street, just close to the college, where he waited until the evening, and then, under cover of darkness, and in a Hansom, rattled off to the station, took a ticket to Paddington, and was speedily steaming away to town at a pace which set the pursuit of all the bedels in the University at defiance.

On reaching "the little village," as the metropolis was affectionately called at Oxford, Edward proceeded to the Tavistock, where he took a bed and left his luggage, and then

sallied out, though at rather a late hour, to seek amusement until bedtime. Bedtime turned out ultimately to be about dawn, when the market was full of dewy cabbages and busy porters, and when the cherries began to arrive and were sold amid much bustle and noise, to the great disgust of Edward, whose chances of sleep became remarkably slender as the business grew brisker.

It was about midday when Edward rose and took a cosy breakfast, after which he sallied out and bent his way citywards in order to have an interview with his guardians. He had written the night before to request Mr. Slowman to meet him at Mr. Wisby's bank.

He found the two old fogies in a very exalted frame of mind. They pointed out to him that as he came of age in a few months,

they would rather not be bothered any more about him. As for these present liabilities, he must plead "under age," and then do what he could when he reached "years of discretion"—and Mr. Wisby laid a spiteful emphasis on the word "discretion."

Edward tried to make them understand that such a plea could not be put forward without insuring the immediate withdrawal of his name from the books of Denbigh College. The Master of Denbigh, on the strength of having formed one of the Oxford Commission, in which he had worked diligently for the Whigs with an eye to a future bishopric, was a stern disciplinarian, and began reforms in his own college by punishing severely any peccadilloes he discovered. I am bound to add that this was the only reform he ever attempted, and that in every other respect his college was no better

managed than any other in the University.

This sketch of the master, boldly dashed in by the unprejudiced hand of Edward, had no effect on the minds of Messrs. Wisby and Slowman—always supposing they were inconvenienced with such articles.

"He must extricate himself as he best could from difficulties into which he had plunged of his own accord, after having been extricated once already—he ought to have learned wisdom from experience. Their very onerous and unsatisfactory task would be brought to an end in a short time, and in the interim they declined to incur any responsibilities. They could do nothing.

Thereupon Ted fired up, and expressed his opinion of their mismanagement of his affairs in pretty round terms. I regret to add that he so forgot himself as to say some-

thing about the hardship of a gentleman's having to talk about such matters as a University career and college debts—things which they knew no more about than about polite society—to a stockbroking civic and the cashier of a humdrum old banking-house.

Thus shaking the dust off his feet against his trustees he left the place in disgust, and, flinging himself into a Hansom, bade the driver "go like fury to the Ordnance Office," where Mr. Martindale, senior, was Permanent Assistant Under-Secretary.

"Mr. Martindale?" said a functionary to whom Edward addressed himself on reaching the office, and who was lounging in a comfortable chair before the hall fire—"Mr. Martindale? Jawkins, do you know where Mr. Martindale sits?"

"No, but I think it must be Mr. Battles-

by's branch," said the person addressed, without turning his head from the window from whence he was surveying the outer world.

"Mr. Battlesby's branch, sir," said the first speaker, half turning to Edward. "Keep to the right, and inquire of the messenger in the room just opposite."

Edward followed these directions, and made his desire to see Mr. Martindale known to a very dapper-looking man who was reading the paper in the messenger's room.

"Mr. Martindale, sir? Don't know the gent. Stop a moment, though. Try Mr. Spoffle's room, sir. Other end of the building. Here, Parker," addressing a boy who was passing with a bundle of papers, "take this gentleman to Mr. Spoffle's room, No. 26; and look here, as you come back, just

go to the lunch-room and bring me a pint of half-and-half."

Convoyed by Parker, Edward reached the room of Mr. Spoffle, who was engaged in eating his lunch, and did not seem to like being interrupted. He directed Edward to Room 34 at the top of the staircase. Up went Edward, rather tired by this time, and wishing Under-Secretaries were a little more accessible. On reaching No. 34 he tapped at the door, and, entering, asked for Martindale. Thereupon a very pink young gentleman, blushing profusely, rose, and, announcing that he was the party in question, hustled Ted out on the landing, and asked him his business in a manner which implied that he did not expect it to be pleasant. Relieved by Ted's explanation that he could not be the Mr. Martindale he wished to see, the young

gentleman retired into the room again, disclaiming all knowledge of any other Martindale in the building, but saying he thought there was "a chap of that name at the Horse Guards."

Confused by this encounter, Ted lost his way in endeavouring to retrace his steps, and eventually found himself where he had started—in the presence of the messenger who had sent him to Mr. Spoffle.

The messenger, having finished the *Times*, and drunk his half-and-half, was inclined to be more communicative now. Edward explained that the Mr. Martindale he wished to see was an elderly man, the Assistant-Under-Sec——

"Why hadn't you said the Onnable Mr. M., or asked for the Under-Secretary, sir, at once? You'd 'a' saved yourself a deal of trouble. Step this way. We don't never

send no one to him unless they apply special. It wouldn't do, you see, sir."

Ted didn't see, but it was not worth while to discuss the question, so he followed the man, who took him along a passage or two, and then handed him over to another messenger.

"This is the gentleman who attends on the Onnable Mr. M., sir. Calvert, this gentleman wishes to see the Under-Secretary."

"Official or private?" asked Mr. Calvert.

Edward stated that his business was of a private nature, and gave his card, with which Calvert hobbled off, making no attempt to conceal the fact that he was anxious to learn who Edward was; indeed, it would have been absurd on his part to attempt to conceal his perusal of the card, for having, as well as a game leg, a blind

eye and very short sight, he had to hold the pasteboard quite close to the better organ of vision, in a manner that reminded Ted of a magpie looking into a marrow-bone.

In a few minutes Calvert returned, and, bidding Edward follow him, led the way to the Under-Secretary's apartment. Mr. Martindale welcomed Edward warmly, and begged him to take a seat. "His son had written to him about his friend Mr. Harding, and he was delighted to make his acquaintance."

"Had Mr. Martindale heard from Tom?" Edward inquired.

"Yes, two days ago; the letter had been delayed on the way. He was well then, and just settling in his hut. The regiment had not been into action yet," Mr. Martindale answered, and then begged to know what he could do to be of service for Ed-

ward, who must, he added, pardon his coming to the point so directly, as they were very busy, the whole office being worked off its legs almost by the pressure consequent on the war.

Edward told his story to Mr. Martindale as briefly as he could. The Under-Secretary shook his head sympathetically at all the unpleasant passages, and deprecatingly when Edward pitched into his guardians, for the Assistant Under-Secretary was a constituted authority himself.

Edward wound up his story by saying that he should be very grateful if Mr. Martindale could obtain him any employment in connection with the army in the Crimea.

"Active service, eh, Mr. Harding? Well, I can tell you there's nothing like it to divert the mind from unpleasant trains of thought. You wouldn't like to come and do my duties

for a while, would you? I'll guarantee you won't have any time to think of anything but the work."

Edward laughed, and said he feared he should be a very inadequate substitute.

"Well, well, perhaps you wouldn't find out in a day what I've been learning all my life. But now about your wish to join our forces in the Crimea. Are you a good horseman?—would you prefer cavalry or infantry? You'd better say the latter, there'll be less difficulty."

Edward said he should be proud to serve his country in any way—on horse or on foot.

"Do you know anything of drill? No! That's unfortunate, but we must try and manage that. If I were you I would go to the barracks and engage a sergeant to come and teach you your drill at once."

Edward thanked him for the advice, and asked how soon he was likely to be sent abroad after obtaining his commission.

"As soon as you like, my dear sir."

"The sooner the better, for I am in perpetual fidget about my Oxford bills."

"Ah, well! there shall be no more delay than is absolutely necessary."

Ted expressed his gratitude in the warmest terms, and said he would not interfere with Mr. Martindale's valuable labours any longer. So they shook hands and parted, the Under-Secretary plunging at once into a paper containing an intricate discussion on the desirability of having two buttons instead of four on the sleeves on the artillery undress jacket, while Edward went off to the Tavistock to write a long letter to his brother James, and tell him of his intention to enter the army.

At the commencement of the second week of his sojourn in London, Edward had the delight of seeing himself gazetted as Ensign in the 203rd Foot, "Berkshire Rifles," and soon after received orders to report himself at the depôt, whence he was to proceed with a detachment to the East.

CHAPTER X.

CYPRESS AND ORANGE-BLOSSOM.

THE great and prosperous city of Liverchester was almost deserted now. The palatial residences in the fine broad streets were left in charge of servants, and the wealthy merchants were away at the seaside or abroad—had fled in every direction, in short, to escape from the pestilence.

It was a strange idea, this Exodus of Wealth. You see, the great men had been erecting their grand houses, and damming back into narrower space day by day the swarming poverty of the town. It was a

sort of siege—Wealth pushing forward its works, and Poverty falling back on its citadel of reeking alleys. But at last came a sortie of the beleaguered garrison. With that black flag I spoke of a little while since waving above them, and commanded by the grisly form of Death, who, marshalling the regiments of coffins, led them out against the besiegers, the army of Poverty marched out and displayed itself, perhaps for the first time, to Wealth and Comfort. Whereupon the besiegers struck their tents, and left Poverty in possession of the field.

And there were local papers and penny-a-liners who, for lack of more interesting particulars, would now and then shock propriety with a paragraph headed "Shocking Destitution in Back Lane," or "Death from Want in Outofsight Alley," with a vivid description of the scene. Sometimes a re-

fractory juryman at a coroner's inquest would prevent things from being done decently and quietly, or some very insane person, a curate or a doctor, on occasion, would make a stir about the inhumanity or negligence of the workhouse authorities.

Woe betide the reporter who reported! For the good people of Liverchester would intimate to his employer that they would be compelled to stop their subscriptions for the paper if these revolting instances of bad taste were repeated. · Woe betide the juryman who would not allow starvation to be huddled away into a pauper's grave without any fuss! For the good people of Liverchester made him a marked man, and his business suffered, his customers declining to deal with such a turbulent demagogue. Woe betide the curate who remonstrated, and interfered to save the bodies as well as the

souls of his famished flock! No more invitations to tea or dinner, no more slippers and braces, no more money for charities, no more attendance at church. The good folks of Liverchester could not countenance a clergyman who neglected his ministerial duties and interfered with the secular arm. Woe betide the medical man who protested that the only things to do his sick people any good were medicines he could not prescribe and make-up—food, air, and cleanliness! If he were the cleverest doctor alive, he would never more be called in by the good folks of Liverchester, who could not employ a physician so constantly visiting among low people, for how could they tell what contagious diseases he might not bring into their houses?

So the wealthy Liverchestrians ignored Misery and Poverty. They stopped up the

rat-holes, and left the vermin to die in them. But, unluckily, a dead rat becomes offensive. An odour not of otto of roses diffuses itself through the most splendid apartment when a deceased rodent lies rotting behind the arras. And just in this way the kept-down and crushed-out Poverty of Liverchester made its presence felt. There was the upheaval of the revolution. Gaunt scarecrows fell down dead outside splendid houses. Long, ragged walking funerals crept by like black noisome worms among the glittering equipages in the main streets. Some selfish, disrespectful wretches actually had the audacity to communicate the disorder to their betters by venturing to breathe the same air with them. Others, dying upon fetid trusses of straw, having no stick of property to make disposal of, bequeathed the only thing they had to call their own—sickness unto death

—to their wealthy neighbours, and not very willing heirs.

Then the revolution was at its height. Barricades of coffins in the streets, manned by deadly vapours, met the gaze of the affrighted citizens on every side, and so in a few days the city was abandoned; "Plague, Pestilence, and Famine" was written up legibly on the walls; and Death was declared Dictator.

Throughout this fight James Harding took his place in the foremost ranks. Cholera was mowing down the people on every side. There was no seaside refuge for the poor with whom he had to deal. While the children of the affrighted merchant who had sped to Scarborough were watching the green waves breaking into a white smoke of foam on the shingle, these unhappy ones, abandoned in that desolate city, were watch-

ing—with what anxious eyes!—the ebb and flow of the tide-line of eternity—were noting, with an awful sense of God's power, the rise and fall of the green earth-waves in the churchyard, which, now that plague-pits were dug and filled so rapidly, seemed to surge on like the rollers that break upon the shore where the ocean is vast, and the wind swells up to fill the watery sails of the incoming Atlantic.

It was a steaming hot day in June, when James had been reading the burial-service over one of those ghastly pits, that he met Prudence Heath again. White, and thinner even than before, the brave little woman was still at her work, carrying comfort and kindness into desolate places, and making poor creatures who had been spiritually as well as physically neglected, begin to think about angels.

The cemetery where James and Prudence met was situated on a hill overlooking the city of Liverchester—a delicious green garden, where it seemed, until the plague-pits began to yawn there, that sleep must be lovely indeed under such green turf, with a still, deep sky above, and the birds chirping and twittering on all sides.

James was tired with a night's watch by a deathbed, and had seated himself on a flat tomb, letting what little air there was fan his feverish forehead. He rose as Prudence approached.

"Ah, Miss Heath, who would have expected to find you here? But I am glad that you do not neglect to catch a breath or two of purer air than we get in this city, though now-a-days even this lovely spot is not the best place for a walk."

"How do you do, Mr. Harding? You look very tired."

"I am, rather, but the air is very refreshing on the hill here."

"I never neglect my walks, you know, because they are absolutely necessary. If one is to persevere in this work—and especially after two illnesses like mine—one must overlook no means of strength and health."

"You are right. But I really don't think this is the best place for a walk now. The number of burials is very large every day."

"I did not come here for a walk, Mr. Harding. I came to visit my mother's grave. Until this year I have always kept it planted with flowers, but my illness and my work have prevented my doing so now."

"We shall have a little respite before

long, I hope, for the sickness must slacken if only because there are so few left to fall its victims, and then, Miss Heath, you must let me assist you in restoring that grave"——

"Oh, I am so pleased to think you agree with me about planting flowers. The vicar told me that he thought it was not becoming to make graves into flower-beds."

"Some people's minds are so very matter-of-fact. But I think flowers the most fitting memorials of the dead. I would far rather be buried among them than be placed under some huge marble monument. It always seems to me when people erect a tombstone that they employ strangers to honour their dead, and that when the piece of mason-work is set up they have done with it at once and for ever. But a memorial that consists of flowers must be watched, and tended, and renewed."

"Yes, that is true. I have always loved the old motto, 'Lord, keep my memory green!'—it would be very fitting for such a grave. While I was lying ill, and the doctors gave me over, those words were always haunting me in my half delirious, half unconscious moments."

As Prudence spoke they heard a child's voice crying very plaintively, "Mammy! mammy!"

"What can that be? A little one left behind by some of the mourners, perhaps. Let us find it."

James sprang to his feet, and listened. The little sorrowful voice called again, and he followed the direction of the sound. A poor, ragged, dirty little girl about three years old was wandering through the graves, sobbing, and calling for its "mammy."

"Come here, little one," said Prudence,

who had followed James. The child, who had gazed at the latter with some show of terror, was reassured by her kind face, which probably was not unfamiliar to this child inhabitant of the dark lanes and narrow courts. She sidled up to Prudence, peeping up from under her ragged elf locks, and at last nestling up close beside the kindly little woman and burying her face in her dress.

"What is it, little one?" asked Prudence, stooping down and caressing the child. "Has mammy brought you here and lost you?"

The child shook her head, and at the mention of "mammy" her eyes filled with tears, and she sobbed out the cry very plaintively.

"Where is mammy, then?"

"She's up here. Mammy, mammy!"

"How do you know, my dear?"

"Mammy's been bad. She couldn't get off the bed, and she isn't at home to-day, and brother Jack told me she was here," was the answer, in very broken childish language, interrupted with many sobs.

Prudence looked significantly at James, and sighed. "Poor wee lamb, I'm afraid you won't find mammy!"

"I came to look for her," said the child. "Mammy! mammy!"

"Poor little thing!" said Prudence, her eyes filling with tears; "mammy is lying under the grass, I fear, Mr. Harding. What can we do with her?"

"Let us take her down into the town. She probably has some friends or relatives. At all events, we can find out where the brother is whom she speaks of."

"Yes, so we can. Here little one, take my hand, and we'll try to find mammy. We

shan't find her here. Shall we go and ask brother Jack about her?"

The child's face brightened, and she nodded. Prudence took her hand and led the way towards the gates.

They had wandered from the path in their endeavours to find the girl, and were now making straight across the grass. As they neared the gates James saw with horror that they had come upon an open pit, in which the first layer of coffins had been already placed.

"Let us go round by that path, Miss Heath. It is not safe to venture too near these pits, and it is not a sight for you to look at. It is trying enough for a strong man."

"I would rather go on—I wish just once to see." And she stepped up to the edge and gazed in.

"Poor things, swept down in ranks!

This is very terrible, Mr. Harding. It makes one tremble to think that we are accountable for much of this."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, not we personally, but the people who live in the city and allow ignorance and want to sow the seeds of such wholesale destruction as this. Ah, Mr. Harding"—she turned towards him, clasping her hands with an expression of infinite sorrow and compassion in her face—"these unhappy people! A little more care and love and teaching, a little less greed and avarice, might have averted the calamity. Good heavens! it is awful to think of men who can let their fellow-creatures die in herds like the beasts that perish."

"I pray heaven that the experience so dearly bought this time will not be thrown away!"

"It will, Mr. Harding. I know it. When once the alarm has subsided, things will go on in the old way, unless a few faithful workers continue to labour for these poor souls."

"That will I for one," said James, very solemnly.

"And I, if I be spared," said Prudence, looking up to Heaven with a brave resignation in her quiet grey eyes.

"God grant it!" said James fervently.

She turned to him and held out her hand. They were still standing by that great yawning pit, with the poor strayed child clinging to Prudence's dress and looking on in dumb wonderment.

"You will always let me be a friend, won't you, Mr. Harding?" she asked, holding out her hand to him frankly; "we might do much for these poor souls."

James bent over her hand reverently and raised it to his lips. There was nothing in the action but the admiration every true man would have felt for that angelic nature. Prudence did not misunderstand its meaning. And then James took courage, and a secret source of hope and fear and strength which he had long hidden in his very inmost heart was unsealed. He took the hand in his more firmly, and looked into the honest, fearless grey eyes, which had such a tenderness in their glance that one thought to oneself at the sight of it, "How that woman could love a man!"

"Prudence Heath, will you be the dearest friend on earth to me? Will you be the best and truest friend a man can have?—will you be my wife?"

"I will be your faithful and loving wife,

James, till the day I die, if you think me worthy."

And that was all!

It seemed as if these two had known each other all their lives, and loved each other as long. The confession was surprised from them, yet each appeared prepared for it. In truth, they had in dark times they had gone through seen very much of one another, and each had learned to admire and respect the other's fine qualities. So when the time came they were not ashamed of their feelings, and had no question about their depth.

In this way Prudence and James plighted their troth, by the side of a yawning plague-pit, with that orphan child clinging to them.

"What a place to select for such a love passage!" I hear some one say. Why not

select that spot? This man and woman were not talking romantic nonsense to each other. Theirs was no tinsel love born of waltzes and whisperings on the stairs. It was not nursed by moonlight wanderings in groves where the nightingales sobbed melody. It was not the untried, unstable love of boys and girls. Their affection had sprung of mutual respect and complete understanding of each other's characters. They were man and wife elect of sorrow and labour and the great truth of life. Their hands were united, their hearts were one, not to share unalloyed sunshine and dreams of fairyland, but to face the world and preserve against all cares and struggles one sacred spot where there should be always light, and peace, and calm—the domestic hearth.

When they had plighted their troth, as I have told you, the two, leading the little

stray child with them, walked down into Liverchester in silence, for the heart of each was full of solemn thoughts.

That night, when James Harding had finished his day's work and flung himself wearily on his bed, there was great happiness and a calm sense of reliant love which seemed to fill him with new strength, and open out a brighter prospect before him. So he fell asleep murmuring the name of the good woman he loved.

He little knew what Prudence Heath would have to suffer on his account. He had never troubled to inquire about her position, and satisfied himself with the belief that she was "a poor relation" of her wealthy guardian's. She dressed very quietly, and was allowed to do exactly as she liked, and he conjectured, therefore, that her doings were little regarded by her uncle,

who, he believed, kept her out of charity. It was true that she had a good deal of money to give away, but he supposed that her uncle gave her a generous allowance, and that she gave it all to the poor. I fancy if James had known the real state of the case he would have been a little less easy of mind as he fell asleep, for of all things in the world that he had a horror of, there was nothing he thought baser and more unworthy of a man than marriage for money.

When Prudence Heath went home, she sat down at once and wrote to her uncle, telling him all. Her uncle had fled with his family, like the rest of the prosperous people of Liverchester. He had tried to persuade Prudence to go with them, but she would not hear of; and as it was his policy not to thwart her, she was allowed to re-

main at the family mansion, a large house in the main street of the city.

I will not attempt to describe the rage of her uncle when he found all his ingenious scheming shattered and dissipated at a word. He declared it was only what he ought to have expected when he let the girl go maundering about with a lot of poor young parsons, always on the look out for money. He wrote her an angry letter, and came over in a few days in person to try to exert his authority; but it was all to no purpose. Prudence was as firm and unyielding as such a brave, good little woman could be in the face of wrong and injustice. Guardian and ward separated on very cold terms.

Prudence had purposely avoided meeting James again until after she had seen her guardian. The day after the stormy interview she wrote him a note asking him to

call. He did so, and then learned for the first time that Prudence Heath was an heiress.

"Why, you don't look delighted at all! And I thought you had most likely heard of it."

"Not a word—and I'm glad I didn't, for I don't think I could have loved you if I had known it, Prue."

"Won't you love me if I am an heiress, James?"

"I can't help it now. It's too late to resist; but I wish I had known it before; I can't bear rich women as a rule."

Prudence got up from the table where she was sitting, and walked across to James, who was standing moodily at the window. He was mortified at the discovery, for he felt that his motives would be misconstrued on all sides.

Prudence came up to him and laid her two hands in his, and then looking into his face with her sweet smile and her frank, honest grey eyes, said—

"Take a penniless girl for your wife, then, James; for my guardian disapproves of the match, and, by my father's will, although he cannot, of course, prevent my marrying, he can deprive me of my fortune."

Then James got frightened on another score.

"Prue, do you think you do wisely to sacrifice all this for a poor parson? You have been used to every comfort, you have never known what it is to want money, or anything which money commands. Reflect —think of what you lose!"

She laid her head on his shoulder, and, looking up trustfully, said—

"Shan't I have you, dear?"

There was no answering that—so he folded her to his heart.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE IN A HUT.

EDWARD HARDING'S sword was fated not to be fleshed in the Crimean campaign. When he reached Balaklava with his detachment he found the war over, and the troops recalled. And then he learned that Tom Martindale was quartered with the 8th Dragoon Guards on the heights, a few hours' ride from the harbour, that he had recovered from his wounds and was in high feather once more. So Ensign Harding handed over his detachment, and asked leave of his commanding officer, in order to

go over to the scene of the war. The leave was granted at once, and next day Edward was careering along on an uneasy Russian pony, under the guidance of a Turk, a little lithe, wiry fellow, who swung along afoot over the ground at a pace which our friend could hardly persuade his sorry nag to emulate. And it was hardly surprising that the poor beast was not good in his paces, for, as Ted learnt afterwards, the wretched animal could have found but little to sustain strength on, having been turned out to pick up a living where there was nothing, or next to nothing, to graze upon, except tent-pegs and cannon-balls. Ted, on hearing the explanation of his horse's condition from Tom Martindale, declared that that accounted for his sensations during that uncomfortable ride. He vowed he could feel the points of the tent-pegs through the

creature's sides, and attributed his frequent stumblings to the weight of undigested cannon-balls.

He was not sorry when the tents of the 8th Dragoon Guards came in sight. He dismissed Buono Johnny with a handsome fee that made the little fellow's eyes sparkle in a way that would have shaken the belief of those who talk about the stolidity of the Mussulman. A vigorous and unremitting application of his sword-sheath to the pony's flanks elicited a progressive movement bordering on a canter, and so Edward Harding jolted on towards the camp, reached it, and inquiring his way to Cornet Martindale's tent of a trooper engaged in repairing a very dilapidated jacket, had it pointed out to him, and the next minute gladly drew rein in front of an edifice of combined clay, canvas, and boarding.

"Tom—Tom Martindale!" shouted Edward.

"Hullo!" was bellowed forth from the interior, and the next instant a figure appeared in the doorway.

Edward Harding could not believe his eyes. Before leaving England, Tom had been photographed in all the first flush of becoming regimentals. Where was the dapper, hale officer in whom Edward had found some likeness to "Old Tom Martindale of Denb. Coll.," despite that peculiar habit which photographs have of making you as unlike yourself as it is possible for a likeness to be?

The figure in the doorway of the hut was a very dark brown unkempt individual, with a tawny beard, a tattered set of regimentals, and a most irregular short black clay pipe. This was even less like the original Tom

Martindale of "Oxford College" than the photograph. But there was no mistaking the voice.

"By Jove, Ted, I'm glad to see you."

"Ain't I glad to see you, Tom!"

So the one came out of the tent-door, and the other scrambled off the horse, which seemed like a cane chair, to recover itself as soon as his weight was removed. The two old friends met and grasped hands. It was no long, ostentations greeting: there was no hugging, and as for kissing, that was quite out of the question. They just gave a short, warm grip, and the freemasonry of old and tried friendship did the rest—if I may except a brief double shuffle cut by Tom as soon as he and Ted were within the tent.

"How about the horse, Tom?"

"I haven't got one—chiefly because I don't use towels, finding the sun (when

one gets it) do the drying cheaper."

"Nonsense, I mean my horse."

"When did you send him? I haven't seen him. I dare say he has been taken for the public service, especially if he was a good 'un, for it's a rarish article."

"Don't be a donkey, Tom—I mean the one I came here upon."

"Oh, is that a horse? I beg a thousand pardons. I took him for a Russian pony—half donkey and half cat, with a touch of the pig in his temper and the hippopotamus in his paces."

"Well, it is a Russian pony I suppose, Tom, since you must be so partiular."

"Oh, I thought my eyes could not deceive me. But why this anxiety about the—the noble steed, if you like, as you seem a little proud of him, to judge from your deep interest in him?"

"What's to be done with him? Have you a shed or anything of that sort?"

"Divvle a bit, yer honour! But there's a truss or so of hay round the corner, and unless I am inexcusably ignorant of the habits and tastes of the animals of this delightful region, I guess you'll find him outside with his attention particularly directed to that snack. And he'll stop there until he has eaten his way out at the other end. Bless you, Ted," he continued, dropping his bantering tone, "he'll be safe not to stir from there—he won't want any halter—that is, unless it is so long since he saw hay that he does not recognise it, in which case he will take himself to his usual provender, tent-pegs and twenty-four-pounders."

And then followed the conversation about the diet of horses in the Crimea to which I have already alluded.

These two young fellows had not seen one another for a long time. They had gone through troubles—and one of them had been near death's door—since they last met. But like true English lads, they kept the demonstration of their feelings carefully choked off, and laughed and chaffed,—and felt deeply all the time.

What was the most natural thing for the old chums to do first of all, think you? Why, they sat down and smoked a pipe, and presently Tom produced a bottle of beer, and they began by-and-by to chat over old times and the story of their lives since they were last together in the dear old "rooms in the old quad." Each, you remember, had the history of a siege to relate. Tom's description of the siege of Sebastopol would perhaps to the world at large seem the more important, but he—and I believe

Ted too—enjoyed far more the recital of the latter's blockade in his rooms, of the final defeat of the silver poker, and the discomfiture of Sconger, the proctor of the Vice-Chancellor's court.

The interior of Tom's hut was by no means so uncomfortable as you would have been led to expect by the aspect of the exterior. It had plenty of furs and warm wraps spread about, and there were a couple of roughly-made lounges of iron and canvas, and a long chest which formed a kind of sofa-bed with the aid of a mattress and a pile of blankets. Edward expressed his surprise and admiration at the snug look of the place.

"Yes—and by Jove, Ted," said the cornet, "it's mainly owing to little Mary. She's a regular little trump, upon my soul she is! When the news of our privations out here

during the winter first reached England, the good little thing set to work—ran up some comforters and mittens and all sorts of dodges for keeping one warm, in no time, spent, I'm afraid, all her money in blankets and all that kind of thing, not to mention creature-comforts—packed 'em up and sent 'em off—and, by Jove, took such trouble about their going, that I got 'em long before my respected governor, who's a very good chap in his way, had had time to tell his man to order the housekeeper to send some one to the outfitters and direct them to take the very earliest opportunity of sending me a regular Canadian outfit."

"She is a dear little girl, Tom."

"Yes—and what am I to do? What can a fellow do in return for such kindness and thoughtfulness, Ted? You know how she has to slave away to get her money—

and yet I'll stake my life she spent every penny of it, and more too perhaps, to send these things off to me. I declare I felt like a robber when I got them! I know she must be wanting money because of her having sent these things. Yet I dare not, cannot, should not, be brute enough to send her any, though I have lots of tin here that I can't do anything with."

"No, of course you couldn't."

"Not yet, that is. For I have made my mind up to one thing. As soon as I get back to England, come weal or woe, if the governor rages—and I'm most grieved to think of annoying him—I'll make that good little girl my wife, and then whatever money I have shall be hers, though it won't be much, I fancy, for I expect the old boy will go through that extraordinary surgical operation known to the scientific as cutting

one off with a shilling. I shall be curious to see the amputation, but I can't help thinking I could observe it to better advantage in the character of a spectator purely."

"Tom, you beggar, you're just the same mad-brained donkey as ever. Can't you be serious for five minutes? Have you thought this over sufficiently, and are you sure you are doing the best for both?"

"Do you mean that I might find some better way of rewarding such affection and self-sacrifice than the presenting her with a worthless fellow like myself? Well, I agree with you, but then it is what would make her happy, I believe—mind, I'm not defending her taste. If Pasha Martindale Ali were to say to the Moon-Faced Pearl of the Feringhees, 'Speak; what reward wilt thou have? even to two-thirds of my kingdom it shall be thine,' the Moon-Faced Pearl would

answer, 'If you please, I'll take that young Cornet of the 8th Dragoon Guards who has a foxy beard and a dilapidated collar-bone.' And I don't see what the Pacha Tommartindale Ali could do but present the M. F. P. with the party in question—he could not even bowstring him first as he deserved, and even though he were persuaded, as I am, that he would be really enhancing the value of the reward. There, my parable is ended. Give me the beer—tropical language naturally makes one a little dry."

"Well, Tom, if you find your pay won't support yourself and wife, you can write for a comic paper occasionally, or take your leave about Christmas and employ it in acting in a pantomime, for I never knew a fellow with such a lot of fun and good spirits always on supply under the most adverse circumstances!"

"Ah, you were always rather an even-tempered, steady-going chap, Ted. But that is a mistake—up and down hill is better for a hoss than a dead level, remember that! But now, as I've given you my love-story, perhaps you won't mind obliging me with a return of the killed and missing in the engagement between you and Emily Prior."

Edward Harding's face lengthened.

"You're a cheerful fellow for a lover of several years' standing, Ted! You don't seem at all delighted at the mention of that beloved name. What has happened? Does the paternal insist on your succeeding him in the buttery business if you would wed his heiress? Or does he refuse her to anyone who hasn't a gold tap to his castle—I beg pardon—quite a slip—tassel to his cap; no allusion to the old boy's beer intended in the mention of tap."

"Go on, Tom. You're likely to learn if you go on talking nineteen to the dozen in that way."

"I am immediately silence on a monument grinning at sorrow! Now divulge."

"Very well, then, you must know, a few days after you left Oxford, old P. turned up according to predictions. It unfortuately happened that he selected for his visit the morning after the boating supper, when there had been some fun going, our boat having bumped up to three during the races. I was a little out of sorts, and was taking a contemplative tankard of beer in your rooms, to which I had retired as being garrets, and therefore more unfrequented than my ground-floors. There came a gentle tap at the door, which I took to be the laundress, and sang out 'Come in' accordingly; whereupon in walked old Prior, and at once

tackled me on the subject of my intentions. For a moment they were more like pitching him out of window than anything else."

"But on reflection you remembered that it was not likely that one or two of your duns or old Sconger would be underneath, so it wasn't worth while being hung for so few. Well, it would have been wasteful."

"Exactly so! You're a diviner, Thomas. But besides that I reflected that anyhow I must get the girl out of the scrape, cost what it might. So I told him that I was a poor man, without any expectations beyond my own industry——"

"Of which you presented him at that moment a very fine sample. Good!"

"But that I was much attached to his daughter," continued Edward, without heeding the interruption, "and that if he would permit it, I wished to be considered as her

accepted suitor. He grumbled about long engagements, different spheres, slight expectations, poverty, doubt of our knowing our real feelings, not unmingled with threats of appeals to the higher powers. Now just at that time I hoped, as you know, to scramble through my difficulties, and an appeal to the higher powers, by resulting probably in rustication, would have been immediate and unavoidable smash. So a selfish anxiety for my own safety giving an additional force to my generous wish to shield the girl made my eloquence so astonishingly persuasive that the old boy at last consented with a very bad grace."

"Do I, then, behold before me the—— But no, by Jove, Ted, that is no subject to joke about. How the deuce can you get out of it?"

"I don't know any more than the dead.

The only comfort to be derived from my smash at Oxford is the hope that it will in some way conduce to a breaking-off of the engagement. I must own, too, that of late I had not been able to feign ardent attachment quite so consistently. You know, when it comes to writing a love-letter daily, one begins to think Rowland Hill, after all, was not such a benefactor of his species—and then one really begins to run dry of subjects."

"You should do as the parsons do—write a letter, as they do a sermon, for every day, and then, when it has come to the end of the year, turn round and begin again. It wouldn't be noticed, I assure you. The most devout and constant worshippers never see through the sermon subterfuge, and I don't think the most affectionate correspondent would discover you."

"I only hope that Emily, poor girl, is beginning to forget me, so that when the time comes it won't cause her much pain. Upon my soul, Tom, I feel an awful brute at times!"

"Poor dear! But be comforted, you woman-killer—you irresistible Adonis! A little bird of my acquaintance—God bless its kind little heart!—has whispered in my ear, and I have a notion that Emily's heart is not likely to be broken at the notion of losing her Edward."

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"To tell you plainly, then, Mary told me before I left England that she had reason to believe Emily did not care a bit about you—that she thought it was a good catch to get hold of a University man, and didn't know you were going a cropper. When Mary told me this, she said she be-

lieved you did not care more for Emily than Emily did for you, but that you fancied she was desperately fond of you, and, feeling yourself committed, were too honourable to throw her over. And, what is more, that dear little girl gave me leave to say this to you at any time when the fetters were beginning to chafe, and you were, in my opinion, prepared to hear it."

"No, Tom, it won't do. It's very kind of you, and it was thoughtful of Mary Freshfield, but I think I know better. You know I haven't much opinion of women's judgment in these matters, and you neither of you can know what I do. I wish I could believe it, but it is impossible. It would be cowardly to do so."

"Well, my dear old boy, you must go your own way. But if you ever find out that what I say is right, ask Mary's pardon

mentally for doubting her power of gauging Emily's character."

"That I will, Tom."

"She's the best little girl in the world, Ted. When I was down at hospital with my wound, her kind face haunted my dreams, and so she was the best nurse I had. I'll tell you what, old boy, when you lie for a long time, as I did, just on the narrow strand between life and death, you see things very differently, and value things the world values, very lightly, and think little of things the world estimates highly. What does it matter to me that my relations cut me and turn up their noses at me for marrying Mary? I suppose that won't kill me, and as long as I live I shall have a home with the blessing of that woman to make it all that a hovel needs to make it a home. By Jove, Ted, when I went slap-dash at

the Russian column in the valley down yonder, I didn't feel in the least shadow of a funk, but went at it as I should have charged the cads down the Corn, about a year before at Oxford. And, mind you, that charge of our Heavy Brigade was smart fighting. I haven't been in any considerable scrimmage since—only a little skirmishing with Cossacks—but even in those slight affairs, though I did not funk, I confess I felt a sort of hope that I might survive, and not lose the happiness I looked forward to in the future with my Mary. It was not fear exactly, but I'm afraid it was not unlike it."

"You're a lucky fellow, Tom. You love and are loved by a splendid woman, and you've no ticks or duns, and you have seen service and been respectably wounded, not disfigured, in the service of your country.

Look at me! I've no money and heaps of debts; I'm tied to a woman whom I do not love, and whose loving me only makes matters worse by making my escape impossible. And then, to finish it up, when I come out to the Crimea in the hopes of getting shot and dying gloriously, lo and behold! peace is proclaimed, and I must just go back to barracks, and thence to the debtors' gaol."

"Come, Ted, cheer up! You mustn't get in the dumps yet. While I've a sixpence you shall share it, as we used to share in the old Oxford days, and it will go hard indeed if you can't be pulled through that Oxford business somehow. And you'll get out of the Emily Prior scrape too, take my word for it. As for the fighting, I'm sorry we can't accommodate you. If you'd only come out a month or so earlier, we could

have put you in the way of enough to satisfy the greatest glutton going for that kind of work. But, bless you, we're not quite sure it is all over now. There have been false starts for the Olive Branch Stakes once or twice already, and we may be at it again tooth and nail before long. If not, you must put up with the blessings of peace, or try to get out to the Cape or India, where you'll be able, perhaps, to obtain what you want. And now what are you up to for the rest of the day?"

Edward explained that he had several days' leave and nothing to do, so it was determined that he should take a shake-down in Tom's hut. The pony was disposed of in the shed where Tom and two brother officers kept a cow and some poultry.

So that night Ted slept on a heap of rugs, furs, and blankets in one corner of the hut,

and, being somewhat tired, thanks to the Russian pony's free action, was soon in the land of dreams, where he found that Mr. Prior had been Commissary-General to the Russian forces in Sebastopol, that the Emperor of the French had ordered him, Edward Harding, to be handed over to the enemy, and that the truculent and implacable Commissary-General had commanded his immediate execution, and that he was on the point of being torn in pieces by wild Russian ponies.

CHAPTER XII.

"I, JAMES, TAKE THEE, PRUDENCE."

MR. GOLDING, the uncle of Prudence Heath, was a man of the world. His brother-in-law, George Heath, Prudence's father, had seen and appreciated him in that character, and when he himself had become hardened, in his fight with the world and a wretched home, he came to envy Golding's qualities, and valued them too highly.

When George Heath married Charity Golding, the rich daughter of old Golding, the banker, he was a fine honest fellow enough in his way. He had been in the

army, had seen service, and distinguished himself. But he had also run through his money, his health, and the better instincts of his nature. His distinguished service had not been recognised as he and all his friends expected, and he was, to begin with, a disappointed man on that account, and he was a man of refined tastes and extravagant habits, which he had learnt in the army. So when he came home from India he listened to the advice of his family, and married Charity Golding for her money. He meant to atone to the woman he wedded for her wealth in every possible manner afterwards—there was so much grace left in him. But he found when he was tried that he could not carry out his honest purpose. There were no sympathies, no community of feeling—no love, in short—and the married life of George Heath and his

wife was a long misery, until he laid her in the grave. And then he was an old man, with only his daughter to make him cling to the world.

He felt his time in the world was not long, and now that the only tender place left in his heart was that occupied by his child, that tender spot was fenced and fortified by the coldness and hardness around it. As I have said, he had come to admire and envy Golding's knowledge of the world, and he believed that this man would be the best guardian his girl could have—better, perhaps, than her father even. In this belief he left her in his charge, and gave him full power over her future.

He fancied to himself that one so rich and so pretty, too—well, she was pleasing, and her mother had been plain—would stand no chance if there were more George

Heaths, even, in the world. But he had sufficient respect for his former self to believe that few men who married a woman for money would have sufficient honesty to intend—as he had intended—to atone for their mercenary wooing by a wedded life of devotion.

"It may wring her heart a bit to be guided by her guardian, but he will know best," he said. "Better a month or so of love-fever than a life-long misery."

But George Heath had bequeathed to his daughter one thing over which her guardian could exercise no power. He had given her the noble character which had died in him many years before, but which sprang up again as vigorous as ever in her pure heart. What his friends had always spoken of as "George's pig-headedness," revived in Prudence as a loyal determination to do

that which was right. And Mr. Golding, a man of the world, saw and recognised this.

It was on this account that he never checked what his wife called her foolish vagaries. Mrs. G., however, was far too well trained to obey—if not to honour—her husband to apply this term to his indulged ward's whims, except at such times when, both being ensconced in the four-post bed, she was allowed freedom of speech for one in the twenty-four hours. You see, Golding really was a man of the world. He ruled his household with a rod of iron, but he knew perfectly well that to exact too much of his wife in the way of reticence as to his plans and actions was simply to sit down on the safety-valve of the domestic engine, and that explosions would be the result. Therefore, he allowed her—to carry on the metaphor—to let off the steam—advise, abuse,

praise, complain, bewail, or entreat, to her heart's content at that peaceful hour when, family prayers having been read, the gas turned off, and finally the bed-candle blown out, he and his spouse retired to rest. He had always this refuge, you observe—whenever Mrs. G. got troublesome, he could lie quite still and go to sleep. And he knew, though he left her, as he dropped off in a peaceful slumber, a dangerous rebel, she would rise in the morning his devoted servant and slave.

Please don't frown, my dear lady readers, at this, because—don't you see?—the result proves that Mrs. G. was right, and that Mr. G. was not only brutal but wrong in falling asleep while his wife was propounding wisdom. Had he listened to her counsel to put an immediate stop on his ward's "foolish vagaries," she might—or might not—

have been a very nice regulation young lady, not given to visiting poor people and falling in love with needy parsons.

At the same time, it is due to Mr. Golding, the man of the world, to remind you that the will of his ward's father was made on a certain plan, and that Mr. Golding's intentions were modelled after that plan. He thought Prudence's vagaries were foolish just as much as his wife did. But George Heath had directed that in case of his daughter marrying against her guardian's wish, one-half of the property should be divided among certain charities. This property had, after all, originally belonged to the Golding family, for it was the miserable money for which George Heath had bartered liberty and happiness when he married Charity Golding. So Mr. Golding determined if possible to recover it. To do so

he must try to make himself as pleasant and amiable to little Prue as possible—must try, in fact, to gain sufficient influence over her to lead her into a marriage with his son. And, knowing her character, he decided it was best to give her her way in all things.

His son, unfortunately, was not so clever a man as his father. He was one of those slangy, half-educated sons of wealthy parvenus who have to succeed their "governors," as they call them, in the business, and who have all the vulgarity and none of the advantages of wealth. He looked upon Prudence as his future wife, and treated her with all the impudent familiarity and neglect which the future Mrs. G., junior, would have to put up with.

When Prudence, in spite of advice, entreaties, and threats, declared herself still firm in her determination to marry James

Harding, Mr. Golding was obliged to admit that his plans had been fruitless. There was nothing to be done but to hand over one half of the property to the charities specified in George Heath's will, and to keep the remainder himself. But Mr. Golding had the desire which so many vulgar people have. He wished to be a Member of Parliament. He had on one occasion gone so far as to issue an address to the "electors and non-electors" of Liverchester, when somebody brought down a well-known man and snuffed his chance out entirely, whereupon he withdrew. Still he nursed the hope of being some day the M.P. for Liverchester, and went through a good deal of his life in rehearsal and preparation for that great occasion. And since in nothing does the truth of the great fact that "a prophet hath no honour in his own country" make itself more

evident than in a contested election when a local magnate goes to the poll, Mr. Golding was always seeing handwriting on the wall. Whenever he did anything at all public he asked himself what could be made of it by the opposition for electioneering purposes. The result was that his parliamentary ambition acted as a sort of conscience, and warned him off many a dirty profitable action.

He did not fail, you may be sure, to perceive what use his enemies might make out of his treatment of his ward. He beheld imaginary placards—"Who robbed the orphan?" "What did Golding do to the fatherless?" and such-like amenities, in his dreams. What was he to do? As he very justly remarked, the wishes of the dead must be regarded, and the last will and testament of George Heath was a very plain

and straightforward document, which even the most acute lawyer could not wrest a second meaning out of.

So Mr. Golding summoned his niece to him, and read her a long and serious lecture on disobedience to her nearest and dearest friend and protector. Then he drew a touching but entirely imaginary picture of her father's last moments. He described George Heath as dying in his arms, and intrusting his girl to him in the most affecting terms.

Now it unfortunately happened that Prudence had a good memory, and she had a clear recollection of being told by her nurse, who had been an old servant of her father's, that Mr. Golding was sent for when George Heath was taken ill; but that as there had never been any very great cordiality between them he had not hastened to his brother-in-

law's bedside, and arrived some hours after his death. Prudence was disgusted at the hypocrisy and falsehood of her uncle, and thenceforth all his eloquence was expended in vain.

In winding up his oration, however, he rose to a noble height of seeming unselfishness. He declared that he could not consent to punish her as severely as her father had intended that he should. He said his conscience would not allow him to take everything from her, and leave her to repent of her error in poverty; and here he drew a highly-coloured picture of the consequences of her marrying a poor man, and the reward of her disobedience.

Even though it was contrary to the last directions of his dear brother, he would leave her some portion of the fortune which might have been hers if she had been a

properly-regulated young person. He would give her a thousand pounds.

The sum was a trifle compared with the splendid property he acquired, even after settling with the charities who were his co-partners in the stroke of good luck.

At first Prudence was disposed to reject the gift with scorn. But on calm reflection she saw that he was merely giving her what was her own. She felt her father had never intended that she should really be deprived of her property. The threat was only to be held out *in terrorem;* not to be enforced if she wished to give her hand to some worthy man who already possessed her heart. So she consented, rather taking it as a right than accepting it as a favour—expecting thanks from her uncle, not expressing gratitude herself—to receive the thousand pounds. It would be a little some-

thing for James and her to begin life upon, and yet not so much as to pain him with the suspicion that his motives might be misinterpreted.

Mr. Golding gave a sigh of relief when he found that she took the money without any difficulty. He had anticipated considerable trouble, and was charmed to think that he had hedged with such success against the chance of his enemies making what he called political capital out of his relations with his ward.

Delighted with the success of this scheme, he set about carrying out another. He saw the inadvisability of his niece's remaining in Liverchester after her union with James. It would never do for wealthy Mr. Golding, the would-be representative of Liverchester, to have his niece and late ward going about the town in shabby clothes—he knew she

was just the sort of woman who would do that, on conscientious grounds—as the wife of a poor curate. He must guard against that, it was very evident; and the best way to do so would be to get the Rev. Mr. Harding out of the place altogether as soon as possible. It would not suit his purpose to have him turned out, because there would be a bother, certain foolish folk in the town having a high opinion of him, which, Mr. Golding felt sure, would induce them to come to him as the uncle of the curate's wife, and ask him to use his influence on his behalf. But for that, nothing would have been easier than to get rid of him, for the vicar was a fast friend and firm ally of Mr. Golding's, and would have listened to his least wish.

Luckily for Mr. Golding he stood well with the Church. He was to contend Liver-

chester on sound Tory principles, "Church and State, Bible and Crown, the British Constitution," etc., etc., etc. Accordingly, not only did the vicar regard him, but the bishop held him in honour. Happy Mr. Golding!

The Bishop of Middleborough was a bishop of the old full-bodied fruity kind. He had been elected to the Bench for the sound reason that he had written a learned treatise "On the Reflective Value and Differential Meanings of the Greek Enclitics," or something of that sort. Something, you will take notice, which most eminently fitted him for the work he was appointed to do in the Christian Church. It is true that in his early days, when he was first tutor, and subsequently master, of his college at Oxford, he had been of rather vague opinions in theology. He had even shown a strong

leaning towards German philosophy. But with apron and shovel-hat had come orthodoxy and zeal—at least, as far as can be judged from outward appearances. No bishop could be more earnest and proper than "J. Middleborough;" and as for heresies, why it was only the other day that he forbade the Bishop of Natal to open his mouth in his diocese.

Mr. Golding had no stancher friend than "J. Middleborough." The bishop loved a good bottle of wine and a first-rate dinner, and he always visited the future candidate for the representation of Liverchester whenever he happened to be in his vicinity.

Nothing could be easier than for Mr. Golding to ask his lordship to consider the case of the Rev. Mr. Harding, who had married—not altogether with Mr. Golding's approval, perhaps, but they must live—a

niece of his. "Any small living which might be in his lordship's gift," etc., etc., etc. The thing was done when the idea was conceived, so certain was the bishop of complying with Mr. Golding's wish.

In the meantime, the pestilence had passed away from Liverchester. It left no signs of its visit beyond the observable frequency of mourning habiliments and the mounds in the cemetery scarcely grown over with grass yet. It left no remembrance in the improved condition of the poor or the enlarged charity of the rich. It was one of those plagues after which the hearts of the manufacturing Pharaohs were hardened, and they refused to let the people go.

And when the long dark days of winter were over, and the spring came—when even in the heart of the town the young

year made its presence known in the snowy spires of the white lilac and the golden cascades of laburnum, when around the city the fields put on a thin veil of emerald green, and the birds began to sing as they built their nests, when the meadows nodded with yellow cowslips and the fruit-trees were laden with blushing blossom, when the thorn bushes were out in white clouds of flower, and the lambs were leaping, when the boughs were in their first pale golden green and the sky began to unfold its depth upon depth of blue—then James Harding and Prudence Heath became man and wife.

They were married very quietly at a little village about three miles from Liverchester. The incumbent was an Oxford man like James, and the old University sympathy had brought them acquainted. There were many of the clergy in the neighbourhood

who had been at Oxford, and they drew together naturally and became friends. Some of them—and I dare say James among the number—had been in their young days at college rather dainty in their notions, and spoke of brother University lads as "cads" or "snobs." But now they were older, and knew better—thought, perhaps, that the epithets would have been more fitly applied to themselves than to these men with whom they were afterwards thrown, and who were good fellows enough, though they wore queer-cut clothes, and never gave wines when they were at Oxford.

The clergyman who married James and Prudence was a poor man with a large family, but a splendid specimen of the kind of labourer much needed in the vineyard. He and James had suited one another, and

he was ready at once to help James in the matter of the marriage.

So early one morning James called for Prudence, and drove her over in a pony-chaise to the little parsonage, where the parson's wife welcomed them with all the warmth and kindness of a good woman made happy by assisting two true lovers to cast their lot together.

It was but a few yards to the church, and they walked to it through the fresh young grass, and heard the larks aloft, singing the wedding-chorus for them. Prudence had the parson's two eldest daughters, quite little people, for bridesmaids, and very pretty they looked in their white muslin frocks. The curate of the next parish, another Oxford man, was James's best man; and good Dr. Hastings, of Liverchester, who had learned to know and love these

people in the dark days when the pestilence was in the town, gave Prudence away.

As Prudence stood at the altar in her quiet plain grey silk dress and white straw bonnet, the sun peeped in through the east window and poured a very rainbow of jewels upon her through the stained glass. And from the yellow robe of a saint in the storied pane the same generous luminary flung a golden glory round James's head, and scattered a largesse of lovely hues over the pavement, as though they were strewn flowers.

And as they stood thus, the clergyman read that most beautiful marriage service with a clear voice, that rang through the silent little church. What grand, simple words they were, thought Prudence. How could people who married for money, or in other ways unlawfully, listen to them with-

out trembling and turning and flying out of the church?

Presently came James's "I will!"—deep, fervent, spoken from the heart. And then Prudence's, lower, not less distinct—sweeter, not less steadfast. So the beautiful service was read to its close.

And then James Harding, not ashamed of his love for this noble wife of his, took her gently to his heart and gave her the first husband's-kiss. And the good clergyman's wife, shining out with smiles through her joyful tears, kissed the bride too, and blessed them both. And they were blessed!

Out from the lovely porch, when the names had been duly signed, into the broad light of the sun amid the jubilant sounds of nature, the song of larks, the caw of rooks, the lowing of kine, the bleating of sheep,

and the incessant carolling of innumerable birds!

A modest breakfast awaited them at the good clergyman's house, where a contented mind was accustomed to spread a perpetual feast, but where for this once the goodwife's busy fingers had laid out all the best dainties the house could supply, and had decked them with spring flowers very tastefully.

There were no speeches, you will guess, but the warmest, most heartfelt wishes for the welfare of the newly-wed. Should not you have liked to be at such a wedding-breakfast, reader mine? I confess I should, though I have a terror of those feasts as a rule. But this one seemed to be indeed a rejoicing over two hearts made one, over two lives blended like bass and treble into splendid harmony.

By-and-by the young couple set out for a

little seaport some miles off, where they were to spend their honeymoon, James's best man having taken his duty at Liverchester for him.

CHAPTER XIII.

HIGHWORTH VISITED AND OXFORD RE-VISITED.

PEACE was proclaimed, and the allied armies were withdrawn from the Crimea. Some of our regiments, however, instead of returning to England, were ordered off to foreign stations, and among these was that gallant regiment the 8th Dragoon Guards. A little disappointment was naturally felt by some of the brave fellows who had not seen home for many years, and had been looking forward to a quiet enjoyment of their newly-acquired fame among their own people. The 8th

Dragoon Guards had been on their route home when the war broke out, and they were sent on at once to the Mediterranean.

Some of the officers growled rather at being packed off to the East, but the growling did not remedy the matter. Those who had friends in high places managed to get leave of absence on "private affairs," and you may be sure that Cornet Martindale, among others, did not forget that a father who is an Under-Secretary of State is rather a useful sort of paternity to possess. So poor Major Pennilesse and Captain Knowboddy, who had served their time in Canada, had to submit to being sent off to Madras without any holidays, while Cornet Martindale and Ensign the Honourable Sumthynge Sumwunne, who had only entered the regiment during the campaign, packed up their goods and chattels and went home to reap

their laurels, the lions of a London season, which, by the way, is the nearest approach to immortality that can be made in these hurrying days. Even that great sensational lion the gorilla (that looks like Irish Natural History, doesn't it?) was handed over to Mr. Spurgeon and Transpontia after a few short months in gilded saloons at the West End.

I think if the worthy Under-Secretary of State had known why his son was so anxious to return home, he would have thought twice ere he exercised his interest to obtain leave of absence. If he had exerted himself at all, it would have been, I fancy, to procure the immediate ordering of the 8th Dragoon Guards to Madras, and the suspension of all leave until further notice. But he was in utter ignorance of Tom's schemes, and very fond and proud of the lad; so he

obtained permission for his son's return to England without meeting any serious opposition from the higher authorities, who themselves were susceptible of family attachments, and had telegraphed, perhaps, to commanders-in-chief to "take care of Dowb" amid all the anxieties and responsibilities of the campaign.

"Ted," said Cornet Martindale, entering Edward Harding's quarters in Balaklava, "I'm off for the little village."

"What little village?" asked the other innocently.

"Why, what the Greeks called the 'metropolis'—London, you old muff."

"How I wish I were going with you!"

"Why don't you?"

"Because I am not the son of an Under-Secretary."

"Don't you abuse a party as has made

hisself pleasant to you, you Radical; and likewise will doubtless be prepared to go in for your leave if you wishes."

"When do you start, Tom?"

"Oh, in a short time! If you want to go, I'll send off to the governor and get your leave, and wait until his answer comes."

"But that will be wasting your leave."

"Oh no! I can square that with the colonel. He'll let me take the days at the other end of my leave instead of this. Besides, I want you to come because you must be my best man."

"You have made up your mind?"

"Yes, in a very small parcel. It's in the tooth-powder box in my dressing-case in the event of accidents."

"Do be serious, Tom."

"Why? What's the use? If you've

made up your mind to suffer the shilling-amputation at the hands of a justly incensed governor, it is better to grin and joke if you can than to mope and try to anticipate the pain of the operation."

"Have you told Mary?"

"Did you ever detect any signs of congenital idiocy in me, Mr. Harding?"

"Why? What's that to do with it?"

"Merely that if I had told Mary what I intend to do when I get back to England, I verily believe she would go away and hide herself where I could not find her."

"And I believe she would be right."

"And I know you're wrong. So, my dear Ted, don't say anything more about it. In the meantime put your best clothes into your bag, for as sure as my name is Tom and not M or N as the case might be, I shall marry Mary Freshfield as soon as I return

to England, aud you will have to be my bridesmaid—I mean groomsman—or be knocked into an undistinguishable pulp, fit for nothing but exportation to the hospital at Scutari as calves'-head jelly. There now!"

It was no use to argue with Tom Martindale when he had once come to a determination, so Edward supplied him with writing materials wherewith to address a letter to his father. The missive was smuggled, by Tom's interest—you see so many people knew that he was the son of an Under-Secretary—among the despatches, and reached London with unusual rapidity. The answer came back in the same way, and in a few days Edward Harding was preparing for his homeward voyage.

When Tom and Edward reached London they stayed for a few days at Mr. Martin-

dale's. But as it was necessary to make their arrangements for Tom's wedding, and with that view must see Mary and arrange plans together, they put up at Long's, and then slipped off quietly into the country for a few days, while poor Mr. Martindale was under the impression that they were spending a week with some brother-officers at Chatham.

Mary Freshfield was governess in a gentleman-farmer's family at Highworth, in Wiltshire, and thither accordingly the two friends made their way.

Poor little Mary was delighted to see them. A governess's life is dreary and weary enough, and her love for Tom was the one bright ray that made existence pleasant. And now, after their long separation, and all her terror and anxiety on his account, here he was back again, and "only a little

changed, after all!". For even Mary's eyes could not be blind to the fact that swarthy, bearded Cornet Martindale was a different sort of man from the dapper-looking, nicely-dressed commoner of Denbigh College, who was so alarmed at having his umbrella opened one wet afternoon in Magdalen Walks.

"The change is not confined to my outside appearance, Mary," said Tom, gravely.

"What do you mean?" she asked, a little alarmed at his serious face.

"Mean? That I never deserved the affection of such a jolly little angel as you, Mary; but that now, if I am not worthy of it, at least I can value it, and you, and that I will, please God, do all in my power to be worthy of it, and make it mine. How soon can you leave this place?"

"Why? I don't think before next quarter."

"Oh, nonsense! Next week!"

"Why, Tom?"

"Because I want you to unite your fortunes with those of a certain vagabond commonly known as Tom Martindale of the 8th Dragoon Guards. Because"—he dropped his tone of banter now, and spoke in a low voice not audible to Edward, who, however, was discreetly deaf, and admiring the landscape with his back to the lovers—"because I want you to be my wife—to marry me as soon as possible."

"Oh, Tom! Have you told your father?"

"No, but I shall do so as soon as you say yes."

"Better wait, Tom, darling Tom—he will be so angry with you."

"I can't help it. I won't go on deceiving him by concealing our engagement."

"That is true, Tom. I never thought of

it in that way before. But he will forbid it."

"I'm of age, and he has no power to do so."

"Except the power every father, I hope, has over an affectionate and grateful son—and I know you are that, Tom."

"Well, yes! But there are bounds, you know, Mary. If I owe my existence to him, in the first place, don't I owe another and a better life to you?"

"Oh, Tom, I dread all this so!"

"Well, we must face it. Nothing can change my purpose. So how soon can you leave?"

"I do not know. I must speak to Mrs. Potter."

It was arranged that Mary should have an interview with her mistress that evening, explain all to her, and hear what she had to say. She was not a very pleasant woman,

and Mary expected to meet with great difficulties.

When they had seen Mary home—for their interview took place in the fields, Mary not daring to ask them to her employer's house—Tom and Edward returned to the "Bell," where the latter found a packet of letters awaiting him, forwarded by Mr. Martindale's butler, who was the devoted accomplice and friend of Tom, and had been so ever since that gallant officer first left off his long clothes. Some of the letters were bills, one or two were invitations, and one was from his brother James, from whom he had not heard for some time. This was enough to occupy him for the evening; and as for Tom, he had ample subject for meditation. So they sat, one on each side of the bow-window of the old inn, in silence, smoking their cigars.

When Mary reached home, she was told by the servant that Mrs. Potter wished to speak with her immediately on her return. She accordingly sent word to that lady that she was ready to wait upon her, and was in a few minutes summoned to the parlour.

Mrs. Potter was an intensely fine lady. She was never weary of talking of "papa's estates in the North," and "when Lord George was over with papa for the shooting season"—the real fact being that "papa" had a little bit of land with a mill on it close to the moors, and used to let part of his house to a nobleman who rented the neighbouring grouse. But you would never have suspected the truth of this from Mrs. Potter's language or behaviour.

"Miss Freshfield, may I ask who your companions were to-day?"

Without any intention of evading the

question, but really surprised and wondering whether Mrs. Potter meant Tom and Edward, Mary asked simply—

"What companions?"

"Be good enough not to prevaricate, young lady!"

"Madam!"

"Oh, don't put on any fine airs with me, miss! Who are those men you were seen walking with to-day?"

Mary naturally hesitated a little, hardly knowing how to describe the "men."

"No wonder you're silent!" said that amiable lady. "I never heard anything so disgraceful—a governess employed in educating youthful minds allowing strange men to make her acquaintance in the streets. For shame! And what do you think were my feelings on being told by Mrs. Parkins and the Miss Soughers of such goings on?"

Even Mary's quiet temper was not calculated to hear this without being ruffled.

"Those gentlemen," she said, "are very old and valued friends of mine. One of them is my affianced husband, Mrs. Potter, and I suppose there is nothing very wrong in my seeing and speaking to him."

"Oh, so you took a situation with me without informing me that you had followers, miss!"

"I had no 'followers,' as you call them, madam. My—Mr. Martindale was serving with his regiment in the Crimea, and has only just returned."

"Well, engaged or not engaged, I'm not going to have a parcel of soldiers dangling about my governess, I can tell you. I'm not going to have my establishment the talk of the town, and won't be scandalized in this way. It's my belief no good can

come of young officers making love to governesses."

"I came home with the intention of asking you, madam, when you could spare me. I do not wish to inconvenience you, but I should wish to go as soon as possible."

"Oh! go to-day if you like—and a good riddance!"

The result of this interview with Mrs. Potter was that Tom, as he sat smoking his cigar, was startled at receiving a note from Mary to say that she had been discharged from her situation, and wished to know what she should do under the circumstances. She had, she told him, taken lodgings at Mrs. Grimley's, the confectioner's, where she was anxiously waiting to see him.

Mrs. Grimley, in spite of her unpromising name, was a thoroughly kind and good woman. She and Mary had been on pleasant

terms for a long time, having struck up an acquaintance while the little Potters were devouring tarts in the shop. She was a motherly sort of woman, and Mary, without a female friend in the town, was glad enough to seek her advice and comfort when Mrs. Potter treated her so cavalierly. A confectioner's shop is somehow in every country town the rendezvous of all local love affairs and flirtations, and as a consequence Mrs. Grimley was very sympathetic and good-natured.

"Come and stop with me, my dear; I've a bed-room and sitting-room you can have, and the young gentleman can come into the shop, which, being a pastrycook's, is open to all alike, and no one can talk, and it will be all right."

So Tom and Mary had an interview in the little back room of Mrs. Grimley's shop,

where the cornet was supposed to be taking a bowl of soup. When he heard how Mary had been treated, he was anxious to go and pull old Potter's nose.

"But, my dear Tom, it was not Mr. Potter who was to blame," expostulated Mary.

"Oh, yes, it was, though! How dare he marry that woman?" said Tom; but he allowed himself to be appeased, and Potter's nose escaped the pulling.

After talking over various plans, Mary proposed to Tom to call in Edward and ask his advice.

"Oh, he'll be for sending you off to stay with Emily, just for the sake of seeing her again."

"Take care, Thomas, my son, or I'll drown you in your own soup," said Edward, who heard the last observation..

"Well, what do you recommend, then, Ted?"

"I have a really good sensible proposal to make. I have just got a letter from my brother, in which he tells me he has been presented with a little living by his bishop. You know the story of Jim's love and marriage, Tom, and you'll agree with me that he will be ready to sympathise with you and Mary, and assist you as far as lies in his power. What I propose is, that I shall write and tell him all about you, and then Mary can go and stay with them, and he can marry you. There! Is not that a royal road out of your little fix?"

Tom and Mary agreed that this was a solution of their difficulty, and Edward accordingly sat down at once and wrote to his brother. That done, he despatched the letter by the hand of Mrs. Grimley's nephew, a little pasty-faced boy, the envy of all the youth of Highworth, because it was currently

reported that he lived entirely on raspberry tarts and apple turnovers—a rumour which his rather unwholesome appearance was calculated to confirm.

"And now about Emily Prior," said Edward, turning to Mary and Tom.

"What of her, O Commander of the Faithless?" said Tom.

"It appears that her governor has written to Jim to hear what has become of me, what chance there is of my returning to Oxford, and whether I intend to keep my engagement."

"Whew! Perhaps he meditates paying your ticks, Ted."

"Not a bit of it! But he says poor Emily is suffering, and, upon my word, I have been behaving like a blackguard. I have not written to her for an age."

"Tom," said Mary, "did you ever tell

Mr. Harding what I told you about his engagement?"

"Yes, of course I did. But, my dear Mary, he won't believe you, and still persists in considering that his unfortunate fascinations are so irresistible that no woman can escape them."

"Don't tease him, Tom—I won't have it. But really, Mr. Harding, there is no reason for you to fret about Emily——"

"Ah, yes—I know. He told me all you said, but unfortunately, you see, I know and feel otherwise, much as I might wish it."

"Well, there!" said Mary with sudden petulance, "I know it is very treacherous and unkind and all that to Emily, but then it is really for her good as well as yours. The truth is, Mr. Harding, that you are not the first University man, by two or three, to whom Emily has been engaged, and, what

is worse, I fear if you were to go up to Oxford now, and watch quietly, you would find she is far from being inconsolable——"

"Impossible! Impossible! Why, Miss Freshfield, you will sooner shake my good opinion of you than my faith in poor Emily," said Edward angrily.

Mary was a little terrified at this outburst. Tom Martindale did not like it. It was as if their kindly intentions had sprung a mine that threatened the destrution of their friendship.

"Look here, Ted. Will you agree to one thing? Let us drop this subject for the present. To-morrow you and I will run over to Oxford—nobody will recognise either of us there with our Crimean beards and military get-up—and we'll just reconnoitre a bit, and then—we shall see what we shall see."

And so the one cloud that threatened the long friendship of these two was dissipated, and the rest of the day passed pleasantly.

Next morning Tom and Edward sped off to Oxford, and put up at the Star. From that ancient hostelrie they pushed forward a reconnaisance, as Tom described it, and invested Mr. Prior's house the first thing next morning, taking a supply of cigars with them, and ensconcing themselves in the parlour of a little public-house, whence they could keep a watch on the garrison.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, Tom, who was on guard at the time, gave notice that the garrison was about to make a sortie; and, sure enough, in a minute or two Emily Prior sallied out, and turned her steps towards Headington.

"What's to be done, Tom? If we follow she will recognise us."

"We must do as we did in the Crimea, O man of little resource!"

"What's that!"

"Come and see!"

Edward followed Tom, who had rushed hastily out and hailed a passing Hansom.

"Here, tumble off, young Bars," he said, addressing the lad who was driving, and who stared a little, and did not seem inclined to obey.

"Come out of that! Don't you know me? Mr. Martindale of Denbigh. Here, take that, and call for the change at the Star this evening!" said Tom, tossing him a half-sovereign.

The lad recognised Tom, and staring for a bit at Ted, recognised him too. Tom saw this, and threatened the youngster with the most awful penalties if he mentioned to any one that he had seen Mr. Harding. The boy promised silence.

Tom then put Edward inside the hansom and mounted the box himself, and in this order they trotted gently after Emily, stopping every now and then, and only just keeping her in sight.

Imagine Tom's delight, and Edward's rage, when, nearly at the top of Headington-hill, a tall, rather sandy youth joined Emily, and the pair wandered off arm-in-arm across the fields.

"Hold hard, Tom!" shouted Edward through the little trap in the roof; but Tom only replied by pushing the horse into a gallop.

"Hold hard, Tom! Don't be a fool! Stop! By Jove if you don't I'll jump out."

"You'll break your neck if you do," said Tom, speaking through the trap. "If you'll promise to sit still and listen to me I'll pull

up; if not, by Jove! I'll take you back to Oxford full gallop."

Edward could not help laughing—and the laughter did him good. So he promised to hear what Tom had to say, and the cab was accordingly pulled up.

"Look here, Ted. No nonsense. You mustn't punch that youth's head—he can't help it."

"I wasn't going to do so."

"Well, I didn't know, and you see I couldn't get off the Hansom and run after you, so I thought it better to come to terms first."

Finally the pair turned the Hansom into the field, shut the gate, and tied the horse to it. Then they ran off across the grass towards the upper corner, and making a slight circuit, contrived to meet Emily and the sandy young gentleman in the next field.

These two had been so absorbed in conversation that they had not noticed the Hansom or its occupants. Nor did they take much heed of the two who were coming to meet them.

When they came up, however, both Edward and Tom took off their hats, whereupon Emily shrieked and turned pale, and the sandy young gentleman turned very pink indeed, and began to propose punching some one's head. Tom immediately took him in hand.

"Sir, although I am an ex-member of the University myself, I don't object to accommodating you in the matter of mutual punching—except in lady's society—whenever you like. But it will be as well for you to know that my friend, also an ex-member of the University, is engaged to Miss Prior, and if he claims priority, I must in duty

bound give way, for you see you've been making love to his *fiancée*."

"Emily, is this true?" exclaimed the sandy young gentleman, in tones of sorrow and surprise.

"She can't deny it, my dear sir."

Whereupon followed explanations, reproaches, anger, grief, tears, and incipient hysterics, the latter on the part of Miss Prior, who, however, abandoned the notion on seeing that the sandy young gentleman did not appear anxious to catch her.

The result was that then and there Emily Prior and Edward Harding broke off the engagement by mutual consent, Emily promising, on condition of their not "breaking" the sandy young gentleman to papa, to keep the old boy quiet, and return Edward's letters.

The sandy youth, being a gentleman, very

nobly undertook to convoy Emily home, on the clear understanding that she was not to misconstrue that act into any encouragement of the idea that he was to be deceived any longer. He also, in a frank, awkward, boyish way, asked Tom and Ted to wine with him that evening. And Tom and Ted went and spent a very pleasant hour or so, leaving the youth, who, though a Queen's man, was a very decent lad, in a high state of excitement at the discovery that he had been entertaining the "Siamese twins," whose fame had not even yet died out in Oxford. He was grateful for having been saved from the artful Emily, who had actually accepted him, probably as a sort of reserve lover, in case Tom were killed off.

I need not describe the relief of Edward, or his penitent apology to Mary Freshfield. As for Tom, he was in splendid spirits, de-

claring that the trip to Oxford, and their doings there, had reminded him of old days, and made him feel quite young again.

As for Emily Prior, she drops out of our story. I believe she still weaves her nets for unthinking undergraduates, but I fancy the danger of her fascinations must be sorely decreased by the ravages of that fierce enemy of all flirts and garrison or University belles, Time. She will probably end by marrying some one in her own rank of life, and be the mother of daughters who shall lay their traps for our grandsons, when we send them to college.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018